THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS

AND OTHER STORIES

By

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CONTENTS

THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS

		PAGE
	POOR DEAR MAMA	5
	THE WORLD WITHOUT	19
	THE TENTS OF KEDAR	33
	WITH ANY AMAZEMENT	49
	THE GARDEN OF EDEN	63
	FATIMA	77
	THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW	95
	THE SWELLING OF JORDAN	109
	L'ENVOI.	123
	WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY	127

CITY OF THE DREADFUL NIGHT

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A REAL LIVE CITY	165
II	THE REFLECTIONS OF A SAVAGE	173
III	THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS	182
IV	ON THE BANKS OF THE HUGLI	193
V	WITH THE CALCUTTA POLICE	204
VI	THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT	212
VII	DEEPER AND DEEPER STILL	224
viii	CONCERNING LUCIA	232

THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS

PREFACE

To the address of
CAPTAIN J. MAFFLIN,
Duke of Derry's (Pink) Hussars.

Dear Mafflin,—You will remember that I wrote this story as an Awful Warning. None the less you have seen fit to disregard it and have followed Gadsby's example—as I betted you would. I acknowledge that you paid the money at once, but you have prejudiced the mind of Mrs. Mafflin against myself, for though I am almost the only respectable friend of your bachelor days, she has been darwaza band to me throughout the season. Further, she caused you to invite me to dinner at the Club, where you called me "a wild ass of the desert," and went home at half-past ten, after discoursing for twenty minutes on the responsibilities of housekeeping. You now drive a mail-phæton and sit under a Church of England clergyman. I am not angry, Jack. It is your kismet, as it was Gaddy's, and his kismet who can avoid? Do not think that I am moved by a spirit of revenge as I write, thus publicly, that you and you alone are responsible for this book. In other and more expansive days, when you could look at a magnum without flushing and at a cheroot without turning white, you supplied me

with most of the material. Take it back again—would that I could have preserved your fetterless speech in the telling—take it back, and by your slippered hearth read it to the late Miss Deercourt. She will not be any the more willing to receive my cards, but she will admire you immensely, and you, I feel sure, will love me. You may even invite me to another very bad dinner—at the Club, which, as you and your wife know, is a safe neutral ground for the entertainment of wild asses. Then, my very dear hypocrite, we shall be quits.

Yours always,
RUDYARD KIPLING.

P. S.—On second thoughts I should recommend you to keep the book away from Mrs. Mafflin.

POOR DEAR MAMA

THE wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome world,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
As it was in the days of old.

Gypsy Song.

SCENE.—Interior of MISS MINNIE THREEGAN'S bedroom at Simla. MISS THREEGAN, in window-seat, turning over a drawerful of chiffons. MISS EMMA DEERCOURT, bosom-friend, who has come to spend the day, sitting on the bed, manipulating the bodice of a ball-room frock and a bunch of artificial lilies of the valley. Time 5.30 P. M., on a hot May afternoon.

MISS DEERCOURT.—And he said:—"I shall never forget this dance," and, of course, I said:—"Oh! How can you be so silly!" Do you think he meant anything, dear?

MISS THREEGAN.—(Extracting long lavender silk stocking from the rubbish.) You know him better than I do.

MISS D.—Oh, do be sympathetic, Minnie! I'm sure he does. At least I would be sure if he wasn't always riding with that odious Mrs. Hagan.

MISS T.—I suppose so. How does one manage to dance through one's heels first? Look at this—isn't it shameful? (Spreads stocking-heel on open hand for inspection.)

MISS D.—Never mind that! You can't mend it. Help me with this hateful bodice. I've run the string so, and I've run the string so, and I can't make the fullness come right. Where would you put this? (Waves lilies of the valley.)

MISS T.—As high up on the shoulder as possible.

MISS D.—Am I quite tall enough? I know it makes May Olger look lop-sided.

MISS T.—Yes, but May hasn't your shoulders. Hers are like a hock-bottle.

BEARER.—(Rapping at door.) Captain Sahib aya.

MISS D.—(Jumping up wildly, and hunting for body, which she has discarded owing to the heat of the day.) Captain Sahib! What Captain Sahib? Oh, good gracious, and I'm only half dressed! Well, I shan't bother.

MISS T.—(Calmly.) You needn't. It isn't for us. That's Captain Gadsby. He is going for a ride with Mama. He generally comes five days out of the seven.

AGONIZED VOICE.—(From an inner apartment.) Minnie, run out and give Captain Gadsby some tea, and tell him I shall be ready in ten minutes; and, O Minnie, come to me an instant, there's a dear girl!

MISS T.—O bother! (Aloud.) Very well, Mama.

Exit, and reappears, after five minutes, flushed, and rubbing her fingers.

Miss D.—You look pink. What has happened?

Miss T.—(In a stage whisper.) A twenty-four-inch waist, and she won't let it out. Where are my bangles? (Rummages on the toilet table, and dabs at her hair with a brush in the interval.)

Miss D.—Who is this Captain Gadsby? I don't think I've met him.

Miss T.—You must have. He belongs to the Harrar set. I've danced with him, but I've never talked to him. He's a big, yellow man, just like a newly hatched chicken, with an e-normous mustache. He walks like this (imitates Cavalry swagger), and he goes "Ha—Hmmm!" deep down his throat when he can't think of anything to say. Mama likes him. I don't.

Miss D.—(Abstractedly.) Does he wax that mustache?

Miss T.—(Busy with powder-puff.) Yes, I think so. Why?

Miss D.—(Bending over the bodice and sewing furiously.) Oh, nothing—only . . .

Miss D.—(Sternly.) Only what? Out with it, Emma.

Miss D.—Well, May Olger—she's engaged to Mr. Charteris, you know—said . . . Promise you won't repeat this?

Miss T.—Yes, I promise. What did she say?

Miss D.—That—that being kissed (with a rush) by a man who didn't wax his mustache was—like eating an egg without salt.

MISS T.—(At her full height, with crushing scorn.) May Olger is a horrid, nasty Thing, and you can tell her I said so. I'm glad she doesn't belong to my set . . . I must go and feed this man! Do I look presentable?

MISS D.—Yes, perfectly. Be quick and hand him over to your Mother, and then we can talk. I shall listen at the door to hear what you say to him.

MISS T.—'Sure I don't care. I'm not afraid of Captain Gadsby.

In proof of this swings into drawing-room with a mannish stride followed by two short steps, which produce the effect of a restive horse entering. Misses CAPTAIN GADSBY, who is sitting in the shadow of the window-curtain, and gazes round helplessly.

CAPTAIN GADSBY.—(Aside.) The filly, by Jove! Must ha' picked up that action from the sire. (Aloud, rising.) Good evening, Miss Threegan.

MISS T.—(Conscious that she is flushing.) Good evening, Captain Gadsby. Mama told me to say that she will be ready in a few minutes. Won't you have some tea? (Aside.) I hope Mama will be quick. What am I to say to the creature. (Aloud and abruptly.) Milk and sugar?

CAPT. G.—No sugar, tha-anks, and very little milk. Ha-Hmmm.

MISS T.—(Aside.) If he's going to do that, I'm lost. I shall laugh. I know I shall!

CAPT. G.—(Pulling at his mustache and watching it sideways down his nose.) Ha-Hmmm! (Aside.) 'Wonder what the little beast can talk about. 'Must make a shot at it.

MISS T.—(Aside.) Oh, this is agonizing. I must say something.

BOTH TOGETHER.—Have you been . . .

CAPT. G.—I beg your pardon. You were going to say—

MISS T.—(Who has been watching the mustache with awed fascination.) Won't you have some eggs?

CAPT. G.—(Looking bewilderedly at the tea-table.) Eggs! (Aside.) Oh, Hades! She must have a nursery-tea at this hour. S'pose they've wiped her mouth and sent her to me while the Mother is getting on her duds. (Aloud.) No, thanks.

MISS T.—(Crimson with confusion.) Oh! I didn't mean that. I wasn't thinking of mu—eggs for an instant. I mean salt. Won't you have some sa—sweets? (Aside.) He'll think me a raving lunatic. I wish Mama would come.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) It was a nursery-tea and she's ashamed of it. By Jove! She doesn't look half bad when she colors up like that. (Aloud, helping himself from the dish.) Have you seen those new chocolates at Peliti's?

MISS T.—No, I made these myself. What are they like?

CAPT. G.—These! Delicious. (Aside.) And that's a fact.

MISS T.—(Aside.) Oh, bother! He'll think I'm fishing for compliments. (Aloud.) No, Peliti's of course.

CAPT. G.—(Enthusiastically.) Not to compare with these. How d'you make them? I can't get my khansamah to understand the simplest thing beyond mutton and murghi.

MISS T.—Yes? I'm not a khansamah, you know. Perhaps you frighten him. You should never frighten a servant. He loses his head. It's very bad policy.

CAPT. G.—He's so awfully stupid.

MISS T.—(Folding her hands in her lap.) You should call him quietly and say:—"O khansamah jee!"

CAPT. G.—(Getting interested.) Yes? (Aside.) Fancy that little featherweight saying, "O khansamah jee" to my blood-thirsty Mir Khan!

MISS T.—Then you should explain the dinner, dish by dish.

CAPT. G.—But I can't speak the vernacular.

MISS T.—(Patronizingly.) You should pass the Higher Standard and try.

Capt. G.—I have, but I don't seem to be any the wiser. Are you?

MISS T.—I never passed the Higher Standard. But the khansamah is very patient with me. He

doesn't get angry when I talk about sheep's topees, or order maunds of grain when I mean seers.

CAPT. G.—(Aside, with intense indignation.) I'd like to see Mir Khan being rude to that girl! Hullo! Steady the Buffs! (Aloud.) And do you understand about horses, too?

MISS T.—A little—not very much. I can't doctor them, but I know what they ought to eat, and I am in charge of our stable.

CAPT. G.—Indeed! You might help me then. What ought a man to give his sais in the Hills? My ruffian says eight rupees, because everything is so dear.

MISS T.—Six rupees a month, and one rupee Simla allowance—neither more nor less. And a grass-cut gets six rupees. That's better than buying grass in the bazar.

CAPT. G.—(Admiringly.) How do you know?

MISS T.—I have tried both ways.

CAPT. G.—Do you ride much, then? I've never seen you on the Mall?

MISS T.—(Aside.) I haven't passed him more than fifty times. (Aloud.) Nearly every day.

CAPT. G.—By Jove! I didn't know that. Ha-Hmmm! (Pulls at his mustaches and is silent for forty seconds.)

MISS T.—(Desperately, and wondering what will happen next.) It looks beautiful. I shouldn't touch it if I were you. (Aside.) It's all Mama's fault for not coming before. I will be rude.

CAPT. G.—(Bronzing under the tan, and bringing down his hand very quickly.) Eh? Wha-at! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! (Laughs uneasily. Aside.) Well, of all the dashed cheek! I never had a woman to say that to me yet. She must be a cool hand or else . . . Ah! that nursery tea!

VOICE FROM THE UNKNOWN.—Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!

CAPT. G.—Good gracious! What's that?

MISS T.—The dog, I think. (Aside.) Emma has been listening, and I'll never forgive her!

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) They don't keep dogs here. (Aloud.) 'Didn't sound like a dog, did it?

MISS T.—Then it must have been the cat. Let's go into the veranda. What a lovely evening it is!

Steps into veranda and looks out across the hills into sunset. The CAPTAIN follows.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Superb eyes! I wonder that I never noticed them before! (Aloud.) There's going to be a dance at Viceregal Lodge on Wednesday. Can you spare me one?

MISS T.—(Shortly.) No! I don't want any of your charity-dances. You only ask me because Mama told you to. I hop and I bump. You know I do!

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) That's true, but little girls shouldn't understand these things. (Aloud.) No, on my word, I don't. You dance beautifully.

MISS T.—Then why do you always stand out

after half a dozen turns? I thought officers in the Army didn't tell fibs.

CAPT. G.—It wasn't a fib, believe me. I really do want the pleasure of a dance with you.

MISS T.—(Wickedly.) Why? Won't Mama dance with you any more?

CAPT. G.—(More earnestly than the necessity demands.) I wasn't thinking of your Mother. (Aside.) You little vixen!

MISS T.—(Still looking out of the window.) Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Well! I wonder what she'll say next. I've never known a woman treat me like this before. I might be—Dash it, I might be an Infantry subaltern! (Aloud.) Oh, please don't trouble. I'm not worth thinking about. Isn't your Mother ready yet?

MISS T.—I should think so; but promise me, Captain Gadsby, you won't take poor dear Mama twice round Jakko any more. It tires her so.

CAPT. G.—She says that no exercise tires her.

MISS T.—Yes, but she suffers afterwards. You don't know what rheumatism is, and you oughtn't to keep her out so late, when it gets chilly in the evenings.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Rheumatism! I thought she came off her horse rather in a bunch. Whew! One lives and learns. (Aloud.) I'm sorry to hear that. She hasn't mentioned it to me.

MISS T.—(Flurried.) Of course not! Poor

dear Mama never would. And you mustn't say that I told you either. Promise me that you won't. Oh, Captain Gadsby, promise me you won't!

CAPT. G.—I am dumb, or—I shall be as soon as you've given me that dance, and another . . . if you can trouble yourself to think about me for a minute.

MISS T.—But you won't like it one little bit. You'll be awfully sorry afterwards.

CAPT. G.—I shall like it above all things, and I shall only be sorry that I didn't get more. (Aside.) Now what in the world am I saying?

MISS T.—Very well. You will have only yourself to thank if your toes are trodden on. Shall we say Seven?

CAPT. G.—And Eleven. (Aside.) She can't be more than eight stone, but, even then, it's an absurdly small foot. (Looks at his own riding boots.)

MISS T.—They're beautifully shiny. I can almost see my face in them.

CAPT. G.—I was thinking whether I should have to go on crutches for the rest of my life if you trod on my toes.

MISS T.—Very likely. Why not change Eleven for a square?

CAPT. G.—No, please! I want them both waltzes. Won't you write them down?

MISS T.—I don't get so many dances that I shall confuse them. You will be the offender.

CAPT. G.—Wait and see! (Aside.) She doesn't dance perfectly, perhaps, but . . .

MISS T.—Your tea must have got cold by this time. Won't you have another cup?

CAPT. G.—No, thanks. Don't you think it's pleasanter out in the veranda? (Aside.) I never saw hair take that color in the sunshine before. (Aloud.) It's like one of Dicksee's pictures.

MISS T.—Yes! It's a wonderful sunset, isn't it? (Bluntly.) But what do you know about Dicksee's pictures?

CAPT. G.—I go Home occasionally. And I used to know the Galleries. (Nervously.) You mustn't think me only a Philistine with . . . a mustache.

MISS T.—Don't! Please don't! I'm so sorry for what I said then. I was horribly rude. It slipped out before I thought. Don't you know the temptation to say frightful and shocking things just for the mere sake of saying them? I'm afraid I gave way to it.

CAPT. G.—(Watching the girl as she flushes.) I think I know the feeling. It would be terrible if we all yielded to it, wouldn't it? For instance, I might say . . .

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(Entering, habited, hatted, and booted.) Ah, Captain Gadsby! 'Sorry to keep you waiting. 'Hope you haven't been bored. 'My little girl been talking to you?

MISS T.—(Aside.) I'm not sorry I spoke

about the rheumatism. I'm not! I'm NOT! I only wish I'd mentioned the corns too.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) What a shame! I wonder how old she is. It never occurred to me before. (Aloud.) We've been discussing "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" in the veranda.

MISS T.—(Aside.) Nice man! He knows that quotation. He isn't a Philistine with a mustache. (Aloud.) Good-by, Captain Gadsby. (Aside.) What a huge hand and what a squeeze! I don't suppose he meant it, but he has driven the rings into my fingers.

POOR DEAR MAMA.—Has Vermilion come round yet? Oh, yes! Captain Gadsby, don't you think that the saddle is too far forward? (They pass into the front veranda.)

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) How the dickens should I know what she prefers? She told me that she doted on horses. (Aloud.) I think it is.

MISS T.—(Coming out into front veranda.) Oh! Bad Buldoo! I must speak to him for this. He has taken up the curb two links, and Vermilion hates that. (Passes out and to horse's head.)

CAPT. G.—Let me do it!

MISS T.—No, Vermilion understands me. Don't you, old man? (Looses curb-chain skilfully, and pats horse on nose and throttle.) Poor Vermilion! Did they want to cut his chin off? There!

CAPTAIN GADSBY watches the interlude with undisguised admiration.

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(Tartly to Miss. T.) You've forgotten your guest, I think, dear.

MISS T.—Good gracious! So I have! Good-by. (Retreats indoors hastily.)

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(Bunching reins in fingers hampered by too tight gauntlets.) Captain Gadsby!

CAPT. GADSBY stoops and makes the foot-rest. POOR DEAR MAMA blunders, halts too long, and breaks through it.

CAPTAIN G.—(Aside.) Can't hold up eleven stone forever. It's all your rheumatism. (Aloud.) Can't imagine why I was so clumsy. (Aside.) Now Little Featherweight woud have gone up like a bird.

They ride out of the garden. The CAPTAIN falls back.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) How that habit catches her under the arms! Ugh!

POOR DEAR MAMA.—(With the worn smile of sixteen seasons, the worse for exchange.) You're dull this afternoon, Captain Gadsby.

CAPT.—(Spurring up wearily.) Why did you keep me waiting so long?

Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera.

(AN INTERVAL OF THREE WEEKS.)

GILDED YOUTH.—(Sitting on railings opposite Town Hall.) Hullo, Gaddy! 'Been trotting out the Gorgonzola? We all thought it was the Gorgon you're mashing.

CAPT. G.—(With withering emphasis.) You

young cub! What the——does it matter to you?

Proceeds to read GILDED YOUTH a lecture on discretion and deportment, which crumples latter like a Chinese Lantern. Departs fuming.

(FURTHER INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

SCENE.—Exterior of New Library on a foggy evening. MISS THREEGAN and MISS DEERCOURT meet among the 'rickshaws. MISS T. is carrying a bundle of books under her left arm.

MISS D.—(Level intonation.) Well?

MISS T.—(Ascending intonation.) Well?

MISS D.—(Capturing her friend's left arm, taking away all the books, placing books in 'rickshaw, returning to arm, securing hand by the third finger and investigating.) Well! you bad girl! And you never told me.

MISS T.—(Demurely.) He—he—he only spoke yesterday afternoon.

MISS D.—Bless you, dear! And I'm to be bridesmaid, aren't I? You know you promised ever so long ago.

MISS T.—Of course. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. (Gets into 'rickshaw.) Oh, Emma!

MISS D.—(With intense interest.) Yes, dear?

MISS T.—(Piano.) It's quite true . . . about . . . the . . . egg.

MISS D.—What egg?

MISS T.—(Pianissimo prestissimo.) The egg without the salt. (Forte.) Chalo ghar ko jaldi, jhampani!

CURTAIN

THE WORLD WITHOUT

"CERTAIN people of importance."

SCENE.—Smoking-room of the Degchi Club. Time 10.30 P. M. of a stuffy night in the Rains. Four men dispersed in picturesque attitudes and easy-chairs. To these enter BLAYNE of the Irregular Moguls, in evening dress.

BLAYNE.—Phew! The Judge ought to be hanged in his own store-godown. Hi, khitmatgar! Poora whisky-peg, to take the taste out of my mouth.

CURTISS.—(Royal Artillery.) That's it, is it? What the deuce made you dine at the Judge's? You know his bandobust.

BLAYNE.—'Thought it couldn't be worse than the Club; but I'll swear he buys ullaged liquor and doctors it with gin and ink. (Looking round the room.) Is this all of you to-night?

DOONE.—(P. W. D.) Anthony was called out at dinner. Mingle had a pain in his tummy.

CURTISS.—Miggy dies of cholera once a week in the Rains, and gets drunk on chlorodyne in between. 'Good little chap, though. Any one at the Judge's, Blayne?

BLAYNE.—Cockley and his memsahib looking

awfully white and fagged. 'Female girl—couldn't catch the name—on her way to the Hills, under the Cockleys' charge—the Judge, and Markyn fresh from Simla—disgustingly fit.

CURTISS.—Good Lord, how truly magnificent! Was there enough ice? When I mangled garbage there I got one whole lump—nearly as big as a walnut. What had Markyn to say for himself?

BLAYNE.—'Seems that every one is having a fairly good time up there in spite of the rain. By Jove, that reminds me! I know I hadn't come across just for the pleasure of your society. News! Great news! Markyn told me.

DOONE.—Who's dead now?

BLAYNE.—No one that I know of; but Gaddy's hooked at last!

DROPPING CHORUS.—How much? The Devil! Markyn was pulling your leg. Not GADDY!

BLAYNE.—"Yea, verily, verily, verily! Verily, verily, I say unto thee." Theodore, the gift o' God! Our Phillup! It's been given out up above.

MACKESY.—(Barrister-at-law.) Huh! Women will give out anything. What does accused say?

BLAYNE.—Markyn told me that he congratulated him warily—one hand held out, t'other ready to guard. Gaddy turned pink and said it was so.

CURTISS.—Poor old Gaddy! They all do it. Who's she? Let's hear the details.

BLAYNE.—She's a girl—daughter of a Colonel Somebody.

DOONE.—Simla's stiff with Colonels' daughters. Be more explicit.

BLAYNE.—Wait a shake. What was her name? Three—something. Three—

CURTISS.—Stars, perhaps. Gaddy knows that brand.

BLAYNE.—Threegan—Minnie Threegan.

MACKESY.—Threegan! Isn't she a little bit of a girl with red hair?

BLAYNE.—'Bout that—from what Markyn said.

MACKESY.—Then I've met her. She was at Lucknow last season. 'Owned a permanently juvenile Mama, and danced damnably. I say, Jervoise, you knew the Threegans, didn't you?

JERVOISE.—(Civilian of twenty-five years' service, waking up from his doze.) Eh! What's that? Knew who? How? I thought I was at Home, confound you!

MACKESY.—The Threegan girl's engaged, so Blayne says.

JERVOISE. — (Slowly.) Engaged — engaged! Bless my soul! I'm getting an old man! Little Minnie Threegan engaged! It was only the other day I went home with them in the Surat—no, the Massilia—and she was crawling about on her hands and knees among the ayahs. 'Used to call me the "Tick Tack Sahib" because I showed her my watch. And that was in Sixty-Seven—no,

Seventy. Good God, how time flies! I'm an old man. I remember when Threegan married Miss Derwent—daughter of old Hooky Derwent—but that was before your time. And so the little baby's engaged to have a little baby of her own! Who's the other fool? . .

MACKESY.—Gadsby of the Pink Hussars.

JERVOISE.—'Never met him. Threegan lived in debt, married in debt, and'll die in debt. 'Must be glad to get the girl off his hands.

BLAYNE.—Gaddy has money—lucky devil. Place at Home, too.

DOONE.—He comes of first-class stock. 'Can't quite understand his being caught by a Colonel's daughter, and (looking cautiously round room) Black Infantry at that! No offense to you, Blayne.

BLAYNE.—(Stiffly.) Not much, tha-anks.

CURTISS.—(Quoting motto of Irregular Moguls.) "We are what we are," eh, old man? But Gaddy was such a superior animal as a rule. Why didn't he go Home and pick his wife there?

MACKESY.—They are all alike when they come to the turn into the straight. About thirty a man begins to get sick of living alone—

CURTISS.—And of the eternal muttony-chop in the morning.

DOONE.—It's dead goat as a rule, but go on, Mackesy.

MACKESY.—If a man's once taken that way nothing will hold him. Do you remember Benoit

of your service, Doone? They transferred him to Tharanda when his time came, and he married a plate-layer's daughter, or something of that kind. She was the only female about the place.

DOONE.—Yes, poor brute. That smashed Benoit's chances altogether. Mrs. Benoit used to ask:—"Was you goin' to the dance this evenin'?"

CURTISS.—Hang it all! Gaddy hasn't married beneath him. There's no tar-brush in the family, I suppose.

JERVOISE.—Tar-brush! Not an anna. You young fellows talk as though the man was doing the girl an honor in marrying her. You're all too conceited—nothing's good enough for you.

BLAYNE.—Not even an empty Club, a dam' bad dinner at the Judge's, and a Station as sickly as a hospital. You're quite right. We're a set of Sybarites.

DOONE.—Luxurious dogs, wallowing in—

CURTISS.—Prickly heat between the shoulders. I'm covered with it. Let's hope Beora will be cooler.

BLAYNE.—Whew! Are you ordered into camp, too? I thought the Gunners had a clean sheet.

CURTISS.—No, worse luck. Two cases yesterday—one died—and if we have a third, out we go. Is there any shooting at Beora, Doone?

DOONE.—The country's under water, except the patch by the Grand Trunk Road. I was there yesterday, looking at a bund, and came across

four poor devils in their last stage. It's rather bad from here to Kuchara.

CURTISS.—Then we're pretty certain to have a heavy go of it. Heigho! I shouldn't mind changing places with Gaddy for a while. 'Sport with Amaryllis in the shade of the Town Hall, and all that. Oh, why doesn't somebody come and marry me, instead of letting me go into cholera camp?

MACKESY—(Pointing to notice forbidding dogs in the Club.) Ask the Committee.

CURTISS.—You irreclaimable ruffian! You'll stand me another peg for that. Blayne, what will you take? Mackesy is fined on moral grounds. Doone, have you any preference?

DOONE.—Small glass Kümmel, please. Excellent carminative, these days. Anthony told me so.

MACKESY.—(Signing voucher for four drinks.) Most unfair punishment. I only thought of Curtiss as Actæon being chivied round the billiard tables by the nymphs of Diana.

BLAYNE.—Curtiss would have to import his nymphs by train. Mrs. Cockley's the only woman in the Station. She won't leave Cockley, and he's doing his best to get her to go.

CURTISS.—Good, indeed! Here's Mrs. Cockley's health. To the only wife in the Station and a damned brave woman!

OMNES.—(Drinking.) A damned brave woman!

BLAYNE.—I suppose Gaddy will bring his wife

here at the end of the cold weather. They are going to be married almost immediately, I believe.

CURTISS.—Gaddy may thank his luck that the Pink Hussars are all detachment and no headquarters this hot weather, or he'd be torn from the arms of his love as sure as death. Have you ever noticed the thorough-minded way British Cavalry takes to cholera? It's because they are so expensive. If the Pinks had stood fast here, they would have been out in camp a month ago. Yes, I should decidedly like to be Gaddy.

MACKESY.—He'll go Home after he's married, and send in his papers—see if he doesn't.

BLAYNE.—Why shouldn't he? Hasn't he money? Would any of us be here if we weren't paupers?

DOONE.—Poor old pauper! What has become of the six hundred you rooked from our table last month?

BLAYNE.—It took unto itself wings. I think an enterprising tradesman got some of it, and a shroff gobbled the rest—or else I spent it.

CURTISS.—Gaddy never had dealings with a shroff in his life.

DOONE.—Virtuous Gaddy! If I had three thousand a month, paid from England, I don't think I'd deal with a shroff either.

MACKESY.—(Yawning.) Oh, it's a sweet life! I wonder whether matrimony would make it sweeter.

CURTISS.—Ask Cockley—with his wife dying by inches!

BLAYNE.—Go home and get a fool of a girl to come out to—what is it Thackeray says?—"the splendid palace of an Indian pro-consul."

DOONE.—Which reminds me. My quarters leak like a sieve. I had fever last night from sleeping in a swamp. And the worst of it is, one can't do anything to a roof till the Rains are over.

CURTISS.—What's wrong with you? You haven't eighty rotting Tommies to take into a running stream.

DOONE.—No: but I'm a compost of boils and bad language. I'm a regular Job all over my body. It's sheer poverty of blood, and I don't see any chance of getting richer—either way.

BLAYNE.—Can't you take leave?

DOONE.—That's the pull you Army men have over us. Ten days are nothing in your sight. I'm so important that Government can't find a substitute if I go away. Ye-es, I'd like to be Gaddy, whoever his wife may be.

CURTISS.—You've passed the turn of life that Mackesy was speaking of.

DOONE.—Indeed I have, but I never yet had the brutality to ask a woman to share my life out here.

BLAYNE.—On my soul I believe you're right. I'm thinking of Mrs. Cockley. The woman's an absolute wreck.

DOONE.—Exactly. Because she stays down

here. The only way to keep her fit would be to send her to the Hills for eight months—and the same with any woman. I fancy I see myself taking a wife on those terms.

MACKESY.—With the rupee at one and sixpence. The little Doones would be little Dehra Doones, with a fine Mussoorie chi-chi to bring home for the holidays.

CURTISS.—And a pair of be-ewtiful sam bhurhorns for Doone to wear, free of expense, presented by—

DOONE.—Yes, it's an enchanting prospect. By the way, the rupee hasn't done falling yet. The time will come when we shall think ourselves lucky if we only lose half our pay.

CURTISS.—Surely a third's loss enough. Who gains by the arrangement? That's what I want to know.

BLAYNE.—The Silver Question! I'm going to bed if you begin squabbling. Thank Goodness, here's Anthony—looking like a ghost.

Enter Anthony, Indian Medical Staff, very white and tired.

ANTHONY.—'Evening, Blayne. It's raining in sheets. Peg lao, khitmatgar. The roads are something ghastly.

CURTISS.—How's Mingle?

ANTHONY.—Very bad, and more frightened. I handed him over to Fewton. Mingle might just as well have called him in the first place, instead of bothering me.

BLAYNE.—He's a nervous little chap. What has he got this time?

ANTHONY.—Can't quite say. A very bad tummy and a blue funk so far. He asked me at once if it was cholera, and I told him not to be a fool. That soothed him.

CURTISS.—Poor devil! The funk does half the business in a man of that build.

ANTHONY.—(Lighting a cheroot.) I firmly believe the funk will kill him if he stays down. You know the amount of trouble he's been giving Fewton for the last three weeks. He's doing his very best to frighten himself into the grave.

GENERAL CHORUS.—Poor little devil! Why doesn't he get away?

ANTHONY.—'Can't. He has his leave all right, but he's so dipped he can't take it, and I don't think his name on paper would raise four annas. That's in confidence, though.

MACKESY.—All the Station knows it.

ANTHONY.—"I suppose I shall have to die here," he said, squirming all across the bed. He's quite made up his mind to Kingdom Come. And I know he has nothing more than a wet-weather tummy if he could only keep a hand on himself.

BLAYNE.—That's bad. That's very bad. Poor little Miggy. Good little chap, too. I say—

ANTHONY.—What do you say?

BLAYNE.—Well, look here—anyhow. If it's like that—as you say—I say fifty.

CURTISS.—I say fifty.

MACKESY.—I go twenty better.

DOONE.—Bloated Crœsus of the Bar! I say fifty. Jervoise, what do you say? Hi! Wake up!

JERVOISE.—Eh! What's that? What's that?

CURTISS.—We want a hundred dibs from you. You're a bachelor drawing a gigantic income, and there's a man in a hole.

JERVOISE.—What man? Any one dead?

BLAYNE.—No, but he'll die if you don't give the hundred. Here! Here's a peg-voucher. You can see what we've signed for, and a chaprassi will come round to-morrow to collect it. So there will be no trouble.

JERVOISE.—(Signing.) One hundred, E. M. J. There you are. (Feebly.) It isn't one of your jokes, is it?

BLAYNE.—No, it really is wanted. Anthony, you were the biggest poker-winner last week, and you've defrauded the tax-collector too long. Sign!

ANTHONY.—Let's see. Three fifties and a seventy—two twenty—three twenty—say four twenty. That'll give him a month clear at the Hills. Many thanks, you men. I'll send round the chaprassi to-morrow.

CURTISS.—You must engineer his taking the stuff, and of course you mustn't—

ANTHONY.—Of course. It would never do. He'd weep with gratitude over his evening drink.

BLAYNE.—That's just what he would do, damn

him. Oh! I say, Anthony, you pretend to know everything. Have you heard about Gaddy?

ANTHONY.—No. Divorce Court at last?

BLAYNE.—Worse. He's engaged.

ANTHONY.—How much? He can't be!

BLAYNE.—He is. He's going to be married in a few weeks. Markyn told me at the Judge's this evening. It's pukka.

ANTHONY.—You don't say so? Holy Moses! There'll be a shine in the tents of Kedar.

CURTISS.—'Regiment cut up rough, think you?

ANTHONY.—'Don't know anything about the Regiment.

MACKESY.—It is bigamy, then?

ANTHONY.—Maybe. Do you mean to say that you men have forgotten or is there more charity in the world than I thought?

DOONE.—You don't look pretty when you are trying to keep a secret. You bloat. Explain.

ANTHONY.—Mrs. Herriott!

BLAYNE.—(After a long pause, to the room generally.) It's my notion that we are a set of fools.

MACKESY.—Nonsense. That business was knocked on the head last season. Why, young Mallard—

ANTHONY.—Mallard was a candlestick, paraded as such. Think a while. Recollect last season and the talk then. Mallard or no Mallard, did Gaddy ever talk to any other woman?

CURTISS.—There's something in that. It was

slightly noticeable now you come to mention it. But she's at Naini Tal and he's at Simla.

ANTHONY.—He had to go to Simla to look after a globe-trotter relative of his—a person with a title. Uncle or aunt.

BLAYNE.—And there he got engaged. No law prevents a man growing tired of a woman.

ANTHONY.—Except that he mustn't do it till the woman is tired of him. And the Herriott woman was not that.

CURTISS.—She may be now. Two months of Naini Tal work wonders.

DOONE.—Curious thing how some women carry a Fate with them. There was a Mrs. Deegie in the Central Provinces whose men invariably fell away and got married. It became a regular proverb with us when I was down there. I remember three men desperately devoted to her, and they all, one after another, took wives.

CURTISS.—That's odd. Now I should have thought that Mrs. Deegie's influence would have led them to take other men's wives. It ought to have made them afraid of the judgment of Providence.

ANTHONY.—Mrs. Herriott will make Gaddy afraid of something more than the judgment of Providence, I fancy.

BLAYNE.—Supposing things are as you say, he'll be a fool to face her. He'll sit tight at Simla.

ANTHONY.—'Shouldn't be a bit surprised if he went off to Naini to explain. He's an unac-

countable sort of man, and she's likely to be a more than unaccountable woman.

DOONE.—What makes you take her character away so confidently?

ANTHONY.—Primum tempus. Gaddy was her first, and a woman doesn't allow her first man to drop away without expostulation. She justifies the first transfer of affection to herself by swearing that it is forever and ever. Consequently . . .

BLAYNE.—Consequently, we are sitting here till past one o'clock, talking scandal like a set of Station cats. Anthony, it's all your fault. We were perfectly respectable till you came in. Go to bed. I'm off. Good night all.

CURTISS.—Past one! It's past two, by Jove, and here's the khit coming for the late charge. Just Heavens! One, two, three, four, five rupees to pay for the pleasure of saying that a poor little beast of a woman is no better than she should be. I'm ashamed of myself. Go to bed, you slanderous villains, and if I'm sent to Beora tomorrow, be prepared to hear I'm dead before paying my card-account!

CURTAIN

THE TENTS OF KEDAR

ONLY why should it be with pain at all,
Why must I 'twixt the leaves of coronal
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why should the other women know so much,
And talk together:—Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now.
Any Wife to any Husband.

SCENE.—A Naini Tal dinner for thirty-four. Plate, wines, crockery, and khitmatgars carefully calculated to scale of Rs. 6,000 per mensem, less exchange. Table split length-ways by banks of flowers.

MRS. HERRIOTT.—(After conversation has risen to proper pitch.) Ah! 'Didn't see you in the crush in the drawing-room. (Sotto voce.) Where have you been all this while, Pip?

CAPTAIN GADSBY.—(Turning from regularly ordained dinner partner and settling hock glasses.) Good evening. (Sotto voce.) Not quite so loud another time. You've no notion how your voice carries. (Aside.) So much for shirking the written explanation. It'll have to be a verbal one now. Sweet prospect! How on earth am I to tell her that I am a respectable, engaged member of society and it's all over between us?

MRS. H.—I've a heavy score against you. Where were you at the Monday Pop? Where were you on Tuesday? Where were you at the Lamonts' tennis? I was looking everywhere.

CAPT. G.—For me? Oh, I was alive somewhere, I suppose. (Aside.) It's for Minnie's sake, but it's going to be dashed unpleasant.

MRS. H.—Have I done anything to offend you? I never meant it if I have. I couldn't help going for a ride with the Vaynor man. It was promised a week before you came up.

CAPT. G.—I didn't know—

MRS. H.—It really was.

CAPT. G.—Anything about it, I mean.

MRS. H.—What has upset you to-day? All these days? You haven't been near me for four whole days—nearly one hundred hours. Was it kind of you, Pip? And I've been looking forward so much to your coming.

CAPT. G.—Have you?

MRS. H.—You know I have! I've been as foolish as a schoolgirl about it. I made a little calendar and put it in my card-case, and every time the twelve o'clock gun went off I scratched out a square and said:—"That brings me nearer to Pip. My Pip!"

CAPT. G.—(With an uneasy laugh.) What will Mackler think if you neglect him so?

MRS. H.—And it hasn't brought you nearer. You seem farther away than ever. Are you sulking about something? I know your temper.

CAPT. G.—No.

MRS. H.—Have I grown old in the last few months, then? (Reaches forward to bank of flowers for menu-card.)

PARTNER ON LEFT.—Allow me. (Hands menu-card. MRS. H. keeps her arm at full stretch for three seconds.)

MRS. H.—(To partner.) Oh, thanks. I didn't see. (Turns to right again.) Is anything in me changed at all?

CAPT. G.—For Goodness' sake, go on with your dinner! You must eat something. Try one of those cutlet arrangements. (Aside.) And I fancied she had good shoulders once upon a time! What an ass a man can make of himself!

MRS. H.—(Helping herself to a paper frill, seven peas, some stamped carrots and a spoonful of gravy.) That isn't an answer. Tell me whether I have done anything.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) If it isn't ended here there will be a ghastly scene somewhere else. If only I'd written to her and stood the racket—at long range! (To khitmatgar.) Han! Simpkin do. (Aloud.) I'll tell you later on.

MRS. H.—Tell me now. It must be some foolish misunderstanding, and you know that there was to be nothing of that sort between us! We, of all people in the world, can't afford it. Is it the Vaynor man, and don't you like to say so? On my honor—

CAPT. G.—I haven't given the Vaynor man a thought.

MRS. H.—But how d'you know that I haven't?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Here's my chance and may the Devil help me through with it. (Aloud and measuredly.) Believe me, I do not care how often or how tenderly you think of the Vaynor man.

MRS. H.—I wonder if you mean that.—Oh, what is the good of squabbling and pretending to misunderstand when you are only up for so short a time? Pip, don't be a stupid!

Follows a pause, during which he crosses his left leg over his right and continues his dinner.

CAPT. G.—(In answer to the thunderstorm in her eyes.) Corns—my worst.

MRS. H.—Upon my word, you are the very rudest man in the world! I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) No, I don't think you will; but I wonder what you will do before it's all over. (To khitmatgar.) Thorah our Simpkin do.

MRS. H.—Well! Haven't you the grace to apologize, bad man?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) I mustn't let it drift back now. Trust a woman for being as blind as a bat when she won't see.

MRS. H.—I'm waiting: or would you like me to dictate a form of apology?

CAPT. G.—(Desperately.) By all means dictate.

MRS. H.—(Lightly.) Very well. Rehearse your several Christian names after me and go on: —"Profess my sincere repentance."

CAPT. G.—"Sincere repentance."

MRS. H.—"For having behaved—"

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) At last! I wish to Goodness she'd look away. "For having behaved"—as I have behaved, and declare that I am thoroughly and heartily sick of the whole business, and take this opportunity of making clear my intention of ending it, now, henceforward, and forever. (Aside.) If any one had told me I should be such a blackguard . . . !

MRS. H.—(Shaking a spoonful of potato-chips into her plate.) That's not a pretty joke.

CAPT. G.—No. It's a reality. (Aside.) I wonder if smashes of this kind are always so raw.

MRS. H.—Really, Pip, you're getting more absurd every day.

CAPT. G.—I don't think you quite understand me. Shall I repeat it?

MRS. H.—No! For pity's sake don't do that. It's too terrible, even in fun.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) I'll let her think it over for a while. But I ought to be horsewhipped.

MRS. H.—I want to know what you meant by what you said just now.

CAPT. G.—Exactly what I said. No less.

MRS. H.—But what have I done to deserve it? What have I done?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) If she only wouldn't look

at me. (Aloud and very slowly, his eyes on his plate.) D'you remember that evening in July, before the Rains broke, when you said that the end would have to come sooner or later . . . and you wondered for which of us it would come first?

MRS. H.—Yes! I was only joking. And you swore that, as long as there was breath in your body, it should never come. And I believed you.

CAPT. G.—(Fingering menu-card.) Well, it has. That's all.

A long pause, during which MRS. H. bows her head and rolls the bread-twist into little pellets: G. stares at the oleanders.

MRS. H.—(Throwing back her head and laughing naturally.) They train us women well, don't they, Pip?

CAPT. G.—(Brutally, touching shirt-stud.) So far as expression goes. (Aside.) It isn't in her nature to take things quietly. There'll be an explosion yet.

MRS. H.—(With a shudder.) Thank you. B-but red Indians allow people to wriggle when they're being tortured, I believe. (Slips fan from girdle and fans slowly: rim of fan level with chin.)

PARTNER ON LEFT.—Very close to-night, isn't it? You find it too much for you?

MRS. H.—Oh, no, not in the least. But they really ought to have punkahs, even in your cool Naini Tal, oughtn't they? (Turns, dropping fan and raising eyebrows.)

CAPT. G.—It's all right. (Aside.) Here comes the storm!

MRS. H.—(Her eyes on the tablecloth: fan ready in right hand.) It was very cleverly managed, Pip, and I congratulate you. You swore —you never contented yourself with merely saying a thing—you swore that, as far as lay in your power, you'd make my wretched life pleasant for me. And you've denied me the consolation of breaking down. I should have done it—indeed I should. A woman would hardly have thought of this refinement, my kind, considerate friend. (Fan-guard as before.) You have explained things so tenderly and truthfully, too! You haven't spoken or written a word of warning, and you have let me believe in you till the last minute. You haven't condescended to give me your reason yet. No! A woman could not have managed it half so well. Are there many men like you in the world?

CAPT. G.—I'm sure I don't know. (To khitmatgar.) Ohé! Simpkin do.

MRS. H.—You call yourself a man of the world, don't you? Do men of the world behave like Devils when they do a woman the honor to get tired of her?

CAPT. G.—I'm sure I don't know. Don't speak so loud!

MRS. H.—Keep us respectable, O Lord, whatever happens! Don't be afraid of my compromising you. You've chosen your ground far too well,

and I've been properly brought up. (Lowering fan.) Haven't you any pity, Pip, except for yourself?

CAPT. G.—Wouldn't it be rather impertinent of me to say that I'm sorry for you?

MRS. H.—I think you have said it once or twice before You're growing very careful of my feelings. My God, Pip, I was a good woman once! You said I was. You've made me what I am. What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me? Won't you say that you are sorry? (Helps herself to iced asparagus.)

CAPT. G.—I am sorry for you, if you want the pity of such a brute as I am. I'm awf'ly sorry for you.

MRS. H.—Rather tame for a man of the world. Do you think that that admission clears you?

CAPT G.—What can I do? I can only tell you what I think of myself. You can't think worse than that?

MRS. H.—Oh, yes, I can! And now, will you tell me the reason of all this? Remorse? Has Bayard been suddenly conscience-stricken?

CAPT. G.—(Angrily, his eyes still lowered.) No! The thing has come to an end on my side. That's all. Mafisch!

MRS. H.—"That's all. Mafisch!" As though I were a Cairene Dragoman. You used to make prettier speeches. D'you remember when you said . . . ?

CAPT. G.—For Heaven's sake don't bring that back! Call me anything you like and I'll admit it—

MRS. H.—But you don't care to be reminded of old lies? If I could hope to hurt you one-tenth as much as you have hurt me to-night . . . No, I wouldn't—I couldn't do it—liar though you are.

CAPT. G.—I've spoken the truth.

MRS. H.—My dear Sir, you flatter yourself. You have lied over the reason. Pip, remember that I know you as you don't know yourself. You have been everything to me, though you are . . . (Fan-guard.) Oh, what a contemptible Thing it is! And so you are merely tired of me?

CAPT. G.—Since you insist upon my repeating it—Yes.

MRS. H.—Lie the first. I wish I knew a coarser word. Lie seems so ineffectual in your case. The fire has just died out and there is no fresh one? Think for a minute, Pip, if you care whether I despise you more than I do. Simply Mafisch, is it?

CAPT G.—Yes. (Aside.) I think I deserve this.

MRS. H.—Lie number two. Before the next glass chokes you, tell me her name.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) I'll make her pay for dragging Minnie into the business! (Aloud.) Is it likely?

MRS. H.—Very likely if you thought that it

would flatter your vanity. You'd cry my name on the housetops to make people turn round.

CAPT. G.—I wish I had. There would have been an end of this business.

MRS. H.—Oh, no, there would not. . . . And so you were going to be virtuous and blasé, were you? To come to me and say:—"I've done with you. The incident is clo-osed." I ought to be proud of having kept such a man so long.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) It only remains to pray for the end of the dinner. (Aloud.) You know what I think of myself.

MRS. H.—As it's the only person in the world you ever do think of, and as I know your mind thoroughly, I do. You want to get it all over and . . . Oh, I can't keep you back! And you're going—think of it. Pip—to throw me over for another woman. And you swore that all other women were . . . Pip, my Pip! She can't care for you as I do. Believe me, she can't. Is it any one that I know?

CAPT. G.—Thank Goodness it isn't. (Aside.) I expected a cyclone, but not an earthquake.

MRS. H.—She can't! Is there anything that I wouldn't do for you—or haven't done? And to think that I should take this trouble over you, knowing what you are! Do you despise me for it?

CAPT. G.—(Wiping his mouth to hide a smile.) Again? It's entirely a work of charity on your part.

MRS. H.—Ahhh! But I have no right to resent

it. . . . Is she better-looking than I? Who was it said—?

CAPT. G.—No—not that!

MRS. H.—I'll be more merciful than you were. Don't you know that all women are alike?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Then this is the exception that proves the rule.

MRS. H.—All of them! I'll tell you anything you like. I will, upon my word! They only want the admiration—from anybody—no matter who—anybody! But there is always one man that they care for more than any one else in the world, and would sacrifice all the others to. Oh, do listen! I've kept the Vaynor man trotting after me like a poodle, and he believes that he is the only man I am interested in. I'll tell you what he said to me.

CAPT. G.—Spare him. (Aside.) I wonder what his version is.

MRS. H.—He's been waiting for me to look at him all through dinner. Shall I do it, and you can see what an idiot he looks?

CAPT. G.—"But what imports the nomination of this gentleman?"

MRS. H.—Watch! (Sends a glance to the Vaynor man, who tries vainly to combine a mouthful of ice-pudding, a smirk of self-satisfaction, a glare of intense devotion, and the stolidity of a British dining countenance.)

CAPT. G.—(Critically.) He doesn't look pretty. Why didn't you wait till the spoon was out of his mouth?

MRS. H.—To amuse you. She'll make an exhibition of you as I've made of him; and people will laugh at you. Oh, Pip, can't you see that? It's as plain as the noonday sun. You'll be trotted about and told lies, and made a fool of like the others. I never made a fool of you, did I?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) What a clever little woman it is!

MRS. H.—Well, what have you to say?

CAPT. G.—I feel better.

MRS. H.—Yes, I suppose so, after I have come down to your level. I couldn't have done it if I hadn't cared for you so much. I have spoken the truth.

CAPT. G.—It doesn't alter the situation.

MRS. H.—(Passionately.) Then she has said that she cares for you! Don't believe her, Pip. It's a lie—as black as yours to me!

CAPT. G.—Ssssteady! I've a notion that a friend of yours is looking at you.

MRS. H.—He! I hate him. He introduced you to me.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) And some people would like women to assist in making the laws. Introduction to imply condonement. (Aloud.) Well, you see, if you can remember so far back as that, I couldn't, in common politeness, refuse the offer.

MRS. H.—In common politeness! We have got beyond that!

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Old ground means fresh trouble. (Aloud.) On my honor—

MRS. H.—Your what? Ha, ha!

CAPT. G.—Dishonor, then. She's not what you imagine. I meant to—

MRS. H.—Don't tell me anything about her! She won't care for you, and when you come back, after having made an exhibition of yourself, you'll find me occupied with—

CAPT. G.—(Insolently.) You couldn't while I am alive. (Aside.) If that doesn't bring her pride to her rescue, nothing will.

MRS. H.—(Drawing herself up.) Couldn't do it? I? (Softening.) You're right. I don't believe I could—though you are what you are—a coward and a liar in grain.

CAPT. G.—It doesn't hurt so much after your little lecture—with demonstrations.

MRS. H.—One mass of vanity! Will nothing ever touch you in this life? There must be a Hereafter if it's only for the benefit of . . . But you will have it all to yourself.

CAPT. G.—(Under his eyebrows.) Are you so certain of that?

MRS. H.—I shall have had mine in this life; and it will serve me right.

CAPT. G.—But the admiration that you insisted on so strongly a moment ago? (Aside.) Oh, I am a brute!

MRS. H.—(Fiercely.) Will that console me for knowing that you will go to her with the same words, the same arguments, and the—the same pet names you used to me? And if she cares for you,

you two will laugh over my story. Won't that be punishment heavy enough even for me—even for me? . . . And it's all useless. That's another punishment.

CAPT. G.—(Feebly.) Oh, come! I'm not so low as you think.

MRS. H.—Not now, perhaps, but you will be. Oh, Pip, if a woman flatters your vanity, there's nothing on earth that you would not tell her; and no meanness that you would not do. Have I known you so long without knowing that?

CAPT. G.—If you can trust me in nothing else—and I don't see why I should be trusted—you can count upon my holding my tongue.

MRS. H.—If you denied everything you've said this evening and declared it was all in fun (a long pause), I'd trust you. Not otherwise. All I ask is, don't tell her my name. Please don't. A man might forget: a woman never would. (Looks up table and sees hostess beginning to collect eyes.) So it's all ended, through no fault of mine. . . . Haven't I behaved beautifully? I've accepted your dismissal, and you managed it as cruelly as you could, and I have made you respect my sex, haven't I? (Arranging gloves and fan.) I only pray that she'll know you some day as I know you now. I wouldn't be you then, for I think even your conceit will be hurt. I hope she'll pay you back the humiliation you've brought on me. I hope. . . . No. I don't. I can't give you up! I shall go crazy. When it's

all over, come back to me, come back to me, and you'll find that you're my Pip still!

CAPT. G.—(Very clearly.) 'False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl!

MRS. H.—(Rising.) Then it was true! They said . . . but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A girl! I was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her Pip. I dare say she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

CAPT. G.—Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done? (Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.) What have I done?

CURTAIN

WITH ANY AMAZEMENT

"And are not afraid with any amazement."
Marriage Service.

Scene.—A bachelor's bedroom—toilet-table arranged with unnatural neatness. Captain Gadsby asleep and snoring heavily. Time, 10.30 A.M.—a glorious autumn day at Simla. Enter delicately Captain Mafflin of Gadsby's regiment. Looks at sleeper, and shakes his head murmuring "Poor Gaddy." Performs violent fantasia with hair-brushes on chair-back.

Capt. M.—Wake up, my sleeping beauty! (Howls.)

"Uprouse ye, then, my merry merry men!
It is our opening day!
Is is our opening da-ay!"

Gaddy, the little dicky-birds have been billing and cooing for ever so long; and I'm here!

Capt. G.—(Sitting up and yawning.) 'Mornin'. This is awf'ly good of you, old fellow. Most awf'ly good of you. Don't know what I should do without you. 'Pon my soul, I don't. 'Haven't slept a wink all night.

Capt. M.—I didn't get in till half-past eleven.

'Had a look at you then, and you seemed to be sleeping as soundly as a condemned criminal.

CAPT. G.—Jack, if you want to make those disgustingly worn-out jokes, you'd better go away. (With portentous gravity.) It's the happiest day in my life.

CAPT. M.—(Chuckling grimly.) Not by a very long chalk, my son. You're going through some of the most refined torture you've ever known. But be calm. I am with you. 'Shun. Dress!

CAPT. G.—Eh! Wha-at?

CAPT. M.—Do you suppose that you are your own master for the next twelve hours? If you do, of course . . . (Makes for the door.)

CAPT. G.—No! For Goodness' sake, old man, don't do that! You'll see me through, won't you? I've been mugging up that beastly drill, and can't remember a line of it.

CAPT. M.—(Overhauling G.'s uniform.)—Go and tub. Don't bother me. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in.

Interval, filled by the noise as of a healthy grampus splashing in the bath-room.

CAPT. G.—(Emerging from dressing-room.) What time is it?

CAPT. M.—Nearly eleven.

CAPT. G.—Five hours more. O Lord!

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) 'First sign of funk, that. 'Wonder if it's going to spread. (Aloud.) Come along to breakfast.

CAPT. G.—I can't eat anything. I don't want any breakfast.

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) So early! (Aloud.) Captain Gadsby, I order you to eat breakfast, and a dashed good breakfast, too. None of your bridal airs and graces with me!

Leads G. downstairs, and stands over him while he eats two chops.

CAPT. G.—(Who has looked at his watch thrice in the last five minutes.) What time is it?

CAPT. M.—Time to come for a walk. Light up.

CAPT. G.—I haven't smoked for ten days, and I won't now. (Takes cheroot which M. has cut for him, and blows smoke through his nose luxuriously.) We aren't going down the Mall, are we?

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) They're all alike in these stages. (Aloud.) No, my Vestal. We're going along the quietest road we can find.

CAPT. G.—Any chance of seeing Her?

CAPT. M.—Innocent! No! Come along, and, if you want me for the final obsequies, don't cut my eye out with your stick.

CAPT. G.—(Spinning round.) I say, isn't She the dearest creature that ever walked? What's the time? What comes after "wilt thou take this woman?"

CAPT. M.—You go for the ring. R'collect it'll be on the top of my right-hand little finger, and just be careful how you draw it off, because I shall have the Verger's fees somewhere in my glove.

CAPT. G.— (Walking forward hastily.) —

D——the Verger! Come along! It's past twelve, and I haven't seen Her since yesterday evening. (Spinning round again.) She's an absolute angel, Jack, and she's a dashed deal too good for me. Look here, does she come up the aisle on my arm, or how?

CAPT. M.—If I thought that there was the least chance of your remembering anything for two consecutive minutes, I'd tell you. Stop passaging about like that!

CAPT. G.—(Halting in the middle of the road.) I say, Jack.

CAPT. M.—Keep quiet for another ten minutes if you can, you lunatic, and walk!

The two tramp at five miles an hour for fifteen minutes

CAPT. G.—What's the time? How about that cursed wedding-cake and the slippers? They don't throw 'em about in church do they?

CAPT. M.—In-variably. The Padre leads off with his boots.

CAPT. G.—Confound your silly soul! Don't make fun of me. I can't stand it, and I won't!

CAPT. M.—(Untroubled.) So-ooo, old horse! You'll have to sleep for a couple of hours this afternoon.

CAPT. G.—(Spinning round.) I'm not going to be treated like a dashed child. Understand that!

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) Nerves gone to fiddle-strings. What a day we're having. (Tenderly

putting his hand on G.'s shoulder.) My David, how long have you known this Jonathan? Would I come up here to make a fool of you—after all these years?

CAPT. G.—(Penitently.) I know, I know, Jack—but I'm as upset as I can be. Don't mind what I say. Just hear me run through the drill and see if I've got it all right:

"To have and to hold for better or worse, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end so help me, God.—Amen."

CAPT. M.—(Suffocating with suppressed laughter.) Yes. That's about the gist of it. I'll prompt if you get into a hat.

CAPT. G.—(Earnestly.) Yes, you'll stick by me, Jack, won't you? I'm awf'ly happy, but I don't mind telling you that I'm in a blue funk.

CAPT. M.—(Gravely.) Are you? I should never have noticed it. You don't look like it.

CAPT. G.—Don't I? That's all right. (Spinning round.) On my soul and honor, Jack, She's the sweetest little angel that ever came down from the sky. There isn't a woman on earth fit to speak to Her!

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) And this is old Gaddy! (Aloud.) Go on if it relieves you.

CAPT. G.—You can laugh! That's all you wild asses of bachelors are fit for.

CAPT. M.—(Drawling.) You never would wait for the troop to come up. You aren't quite married yet, y' know.

CAPT. G.—Ugh! That reminds me. I don't believe I shall be able to get into my boots. Let's go home and try 'em on! (Hurries forward.)

CAPT. M.—'Wouldn't be in your shoes for anything that Asia has to offer.

CAPT. G.—(Spinning round.) That just shows your hideous blackness of soul—your dense stupidity—your brutal narrow-mindedness. There's only one fault about you. You're the best of good fellows, and I don't know what I should have done without you, but—you aren't married. (Wags his head gravely.) Take a wife, Jack.

CAPT. G.—(With a face like a wall.) Ya-as. Whose for choice?

CAPT. G.—If you're going to be a blackguard, I'm going on . . . What's the time?

CAPT. M.—(Hums)—

"An' since it was very clear we drank only ginger-beer, Faith, there must ha' been some stings in the ginger."

Come back, you maniac. I'm going to take you home, and you're going to lie down.

CAPT. G.—What on earth do I want to lie down for?

CAPT. M.—Give me a light from your cheroot and see.

CAPT. G.—(Watching cheroot-butt quiver like a tuning-fork.) Sweet state I'm in!

CAPT. M.—You are. I'll get you a peg and you'll go to sleep.

They return and M. compounds a four-finger peg.

CAPT. G.—O, bus! bus! It'll make me as drunk as an owl.

CAPT. M.—'Curious thing, 'twont have the slightest effect on you. Drink it off, chuck yourself down there, and go to bye-bye.

CAPT. G.—It's absurd. I shan't sleep. I know I shan't!

Falls into heavy doze at end of seven minutes. CAPT. M. watches him tenderly.

CAPT. M.—Poor old Gaddy! I've seen a few turned off before, but never one who went to the gallows in this condition. 'Can't tell how it affects 'em, though. It's the thoroughbreds that sweat when they're backed into double-harness. . . . And that's the man who went through the guns at Amdheran like a devil possessed of devils. (Leans over G.) But this is worse than the guns, old pal—worse than the guns, isn't it? (G. turns in his sleep, and M. touches him clumsily on the forehead.) Poor, dear, old Gaddy! Going like the rest of 'em—going like the rest of 'em. . . . Friend that sticketh closer than a brother . . . eight years! Dashed bit of a slip of a girl . . . eight weeks! And—where's your friend. (Smokes disconsolately till church clock strikes three.)

CAPT. M.—Up with you! Get into your kit.

CAPT. G.—Already? Isn't it too soon? Hadn't I better have a shave?

CAPT. M.—No! You're all right. (Aside.) He'd chip his chin to pieces.

CAPT. G.—What's the hurry?

CAPT. M.—You've got to be there first.

CAPT. G.—To be stared at?

CAPT. M.—Exactly. You're part of the show. Where's the burnisher? Your spurs are in a shameful state.

CAPT. G.—(Gruffly.) Jack, I be damned if you shall do that for me.

CAPT. M.—(More gruffly.) Dry up and get dressed! If I choose to clean your spurs, you're under my orders.

CAPT. G. dresses. M. follows suit.

CAPT. M.—(Critically, walking round.) M'yes, you'll do. Oh, don't look so like a criminal. Ring, gloves, fees—that's all right for me. Let your mustache alone. Now, if the tats are ready, we'll go.

CAPT. G.—(Nervously.) It's much too soon. Let's light up! Let's have a peg! Let's—

CAPT. M.—Let's make bally asses of ourselves.

BELLS.—(Without.)

Good—peo—ple—all
To prayers—we call.

CAPT. M.—There go the bells! Come on—unless you'd rather not. (They ride off.)

BELLS.—

We honor the King
And Bride's joy do bring—
Good tidings we tell
And ring the Dead's knell.

CAPT. G.—(Dismounting at the door of the Church.) I say, aren't we much too soon? There are no end of people inside. I say, aren't we much too late? Stick by me, Jack! What the devil do I do?

CAPT. M.—Strike an attitude at the head of the aisle and wait for Her. (G. groans as M. wheels him into position before three hundred eyes.)

CAPT. M.—(Imploringly.) Gaddy, if you love me, for pity's sake, for the Honor of the Regiment, stand up! Chuck yourself into your uniform! Look like a man! I've got to speak to the Padre a minute. (G. breaks into a gentle perspiration.) If you wipe your face I'll never be your best man again. Stand up! (G. trembles visibly.)

CAPT. M.—(Returning.) She's coming now. Look out when the music starts. There's the organ beginning to clack.

Bride steps out of 'rickshaw at Church door. G. catches a glimpse of her and takes heart.

ORGAN.—(Diapason and bourdon.)

The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest marriage day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away.

CAPT. M.—(Watching G.) By Jove! He is looking well. Didn't think he had it in him.

CAPT. G.—How long does this hymn go on for?

CAPT. M.—It will be over directly. (Anxiously.) Beginning to bleach and gulp? Hold on, Gaddy, and think o' the Regiment.

CAPT. G.—(Measuredly.) I say, there's a big brown lizard crawling up that wall.

CAPT. M.—My Sainted Mother! The last stage of collapse!

Bride comes up to left of altar, lifts her eyes once to G., who is suddenly smitten mad.

CAPT. G.—(To himself again and again.) Little Featherweight's a woman—a woman! And I thought she was a little girl.

CAPT. M.—(In a whisper.) From the halt—inward wheel.

CAPT. G. obeys mechanically and the ceremony proceeds.

PADRE.— . . . only unto her as long as ye both shall live?

CAPT. G.—(His throat useless.) Ha—hmmm!

CAPT. M.—Say you will or you won't. There's no second deal here.

Bride gives response with perfect coolness, and is given away by the father.

CAPT. G.—(Thinking to show his learning.) Jack, give me away now, quick!

CAPT. M.—You've given yourself away quite

enough. Her right hand, man! Repeat! Repeat! "Theodore Philip." Have you forgotten your own name?

CAPT. G. stumbles through Affirmation, which Bride repeats without a tremor.

CAPT. M.—Now the ring! Follow the Padre! Don't pull off my glove! Here it is! Great Cupid, he's found his voice!

G. repeats Troth in a voice to be heard to the end of the Church and turns on his heel.

CAPT. M.—(Desperately.) Rein back! Back to your troop! 'Tisn't half legal yet.

PADRE.— . . . joined together let no man put asunder.

CAPT. G. paralyzed with fear, jibs after Blessing.

CAPT. M.—(Quickly.) On your own front—one length. Take her with you. I don't come. You've nothing to say. (CAPT. G. jingles up to altar.)

CAPT. M.—(In a piercing rattle meant to be a whisper.) Kneel, you stiff-necked ruffian! Kneel!

PADRE.— . . . whose daughters you are, so long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.

CAPT. M.—Dismiss! Break off! Left wheel!

All troop to vestry. They sign.

CAPT. M.—Kiss Her, Gaddy.

CAPT. G.—(Rubbing the ink into his glove.) Eh! Wha—at?

CAPT. M.—(Taking one pace to Bride.) If you don't, I shall.

CAPT. G.—(Interposing an arm.) Not this journey!

General kissing, in which CAPT. G. is pursued by unknown female.

CAPT. G.—(Faintly to M.) This is Hades! Can I wipe my face now?

CAPT. M.—My responsibility has ended. Better ask Missis Gadsby.

CAPT. G. winces as if shot and procession is Mendelssohned out of Church to paternal roof, where usual tortures take place over the wedding-cake.

CAPT. M.—(At table.) Up with you, Gaddy. They expect a speech.

CAPT. G.—(After three minutes' agony.) Ha hmmm. (Thunders of applause.)

CAPT. M.—Doocid good, for a first attempt. Now go and change your kit while Mama is weeping over—"the Missus." (CAPT. G. disappears. CAPT. M. starts up tearing his hair.) It's not half legal. Where are the shoes? Get an ayah.

AYAH.—Missie Captain Sahib done gone band karo all the jutis.

CAPT. M.—(Brandishing scabbarded sword.)

Woman, produce those shoes! Some one lend me a bread-knife. We mustn't crack Gaddy's head more than it is. (Slices heel off white satin slipper and puts slipper up his sleeve.) Where is the Bride? (To the company at large.) Be tender with that rice. It's a heathen custom. Give me the big bag.

. . . . . .

Bride slips out quietly into 'rickshaw and departs towards the sunset.

Capt. M.—(In the open.) Stole away, by Jove! So much the worse for Gaddy! Here he is. Now, Gaddy, this'll be livelier than Amdheran! Where's your horse?

Capt. G.—(Furiously, seeing that the women are out of earshot.) Where the——is my Wife?

Capt. M.—Half-way to Mahasu by this time. You'll have to ride like Young Lochinvar.

Horse comes round on his hind legs; refuses to let G. handle him.

Capt. G.—Oh, you will, will you? Get round, you brute—you hog—you beast! Get round!

Wrenches horse's head over, nearly breaking lower jaw; swings himself into saddle, and sends home both spurs in the midst of a spattering gale of Best Patna.

Capt. M.—For your life and your love—ride, Gaddy!—and God bless you!

Throws half a pound of rice at G., who disap-

pears, bowed forward on the saddle, in a cloud of sunlit dust.

CAPT. M.—I've lost old Gaddy. (Lights cigarette and strolls off, singing absently):—

"You may carve it on his tombstone, you may cut it on his card,
That a young man married is a young man marred!"

MISS DEERCOURT.—(From her horse.) Really, Captain Mafflin! You are more plain-spoken than polite!

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) They say marriage is like cholera. Wonder who'll be the next victim?

White satin slipper slides from his sleeve and falls at his feet. Left wondering.

CURTAIN

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

"And ye shall be as—Gods!"

Scene.—Thymy grass-plot at back of the Mahasu dâk-bungalow, overlooking little wooded valley. On the left, glimpse of the Dead Forest of Fagoo; on the right, Simla Hills. In background, line of the Snows. Capt. Gadsby, now one week a husband, is smoking the pipe of peace on a rug in the sunshine. Banjo and tobacco-pouch on rug. Overhead, the Fagoo eagles. Mrs. G. comes out of bungalow.

Mrs. G.—My husband!

Capt. G.—(Lazily, with intense enjoyment.) Eh, wha-at? Say that again.

Mrs. G.—I've written to Mama and told her that we shall be back on the 17th.

Capt. G.—Did you give her my love?

Mrs. G.—No, I kept all that for myself. (Sitting down by his side.) I thought you wouldn't mind.

Capt. G.—(With mock sternness.) I object awf'ly. How did you know that it was yours to keep?

Mrs. G.—I guessed, Phil.

Capt. G.—(Rapturously.) Lit-tle Feather-weight!

MRS. G.—I won't be called those sporting pet names, bad boy.

CAPT. G.—You'll be called anything I choose. Has it ever occurred to you, Madam, that you are my Wife?

MRS. G.—It has. I haven't ceased wondering at it yet.

CAPT. G.—Nor I. It seems so strange; and yet, somehow, it doesn't. (Confidently.) You see, it could have been no one else.

MRS. G.—(Softly.) No. No one else—for me or for you. It must have been all arranged from the beginning. Phil, tell me again what made you care for me.

CAPT. G.—How could I help it? You were you, you know.

MRS. G.—Did you ever want to help it? Speak the truth!

CAPT. G.—(A twinkle in his eye.) I did, darling, just at the first. But only at the very first. (Chuckles.) I called you—stoop low and I'll whisper—"a little beast." Ho! ho! ho!

MRS. G.—(Taking him by the mustache and making him sit up.) "A—little—beast!" Stop laughing over your crime! And yet you had the —the—awful cheek to propose to me!

CAPT. G.—I'd changed my mind then. And you weren't a little beast any more.

MRS. G.—Thank you, Sir! And when was I ever?

CAPT. G.—Never! But that first day, when

you gave me tea in that peach-colored muslin gown thing, you looked—you did indeed, dear —such an absurd little mite. And I didn't know what to say to you.

MRS. G.—(Twisting mustache.) So you said "Little beast." Upon my word, Sir! I called you a "Crrrreature," but I wish now I had called you something worse.

CAPT. G.—(Very meekly.) I apologize, but you're hurting me awf'ly. (Interlude.) You're welcome to torture me again on those terms.

MRS. G.—Oh, why did you let me do it?

CAPT. G.—(Looking across valley.) No reason in particular, but—if it amused you or did you any good—you might—wipe those dear little boots of yours on me.

MRS. G.—(Stretching out her hands.) Don't! Oh, don't! Philip, my King, please don't talk like that. It's how I feel. You're so much too good for me. So much too good!

CAPT. G.—Me! I'm not fit to put my arm round you. (Puts it round.)

MRS. G.—Yes, you are. But I—what have I ever done?

CAPT. G.—Given me a wee bit of your heart, haven't you, my Queen?

MRS. G.—That's nothing. Any one would do that. They cou—couldn't help it.

CAPT. G.—Pussy, you'll make me horribly conceited. Just when I was beginning to feel so humble, too.

MRS. G.—Humble! I don't believe it's in your character.

CAPT. G.—What do you know of my character, Impertinence?

MRS. G.—Ah, but I shall, shan't I, Phil? I shall have time in all the years and years to come, to know everything about you; and there will be no secrets between us.

CAPT. G.—Little witch! I believe you know me thoroughly already.

MRS. G.—I think I can guess. You're selfish?

CAPT. G.—Yes.

MRS. G.—Foolish?

CAPT. G.—Very.

MRS. G.—And a dear?

CAPT. G.—That is as my lady pleases.

MRS. G.—Then your lady is pleased. (A pause.) D'you know that we're two solemn, grown-up people—

CAPT. G.—(Tilting her straw hat over her eyes.) You grown up! Pooh! You're a baby.

MRS. G.—And we're talking nonsense.

CAPT. G.—Then let's go on talking nonsense. I rather like it. Pussy, I'll tell you a secret. Promise not to repeat?

MRS. G.—Ye—es. Only to you.

CAPT. G.—I love you.

MRS. G.—Re-ally! For how long?

CAPT. G.—For ever and ever.

MRS. G.—That's a long time.

CAPT. G.—Think so? It's the shortest I can do with.

MRS. G.—You're getting quite clever.

CAPT. G.—I'm talking to you.

MRS. G.—Prettily turned. Hold up your stupid old head and I'll pay you for it!

CAPT. G.—(Affecting supreme contempt.) Take it yourself if you want it.

MRS. G.—I've a great mind to . . . and I will! (Takes it, and is repaid with interest.)

CAPT. G.—Little Featherweight, it's my opinion that we are a couple of idiots.

MRS. G.—We're the only two sensible people in the world! Ask the eagle. He's coming by.

CAPT. G.—Ah! I dare say he's seen a good many "sensible people" at Mahasu. They say that those birds live for ever so long.

MRS. G.—How long?

CAPT. G.—A hundred and twenty years.

MRS. G.—A hundred and twenty years! O-oh! And in a hundred and twenty years where will these two sensible people be?

CAPT. G.—What does it matter so long as we are together now?

MRS. G.—(Looking round the horizon.) Yes. Only you and I—I and you—in the whole wide, wide world until the end. (Sees the line of the Snows.) How big and quiet the hills look! D' you think they care for us?

CAPT. G.—'Can't say I've consulted 'em particularly. I care, and that's enough for me.

MRS. G.—(Drawing nearer to him.) Yes, now . . . but afterwards. What's that little black blur on the Snows?

CAPT. G.—A snowstorm, forty miles away. You'll see it move, as the wind carries it across the face of that spur, and then it will be all gone.

MRS. G.—And then it will be all gone. (Shivers.)

CAPT. G.—(Anxiously.) 'Not chilled, pet, are you? 'Better let me get your cloak.

MRS. G.—No. Don't leave me, Phil. Stay here. I believe I am afraid. Oh, why are the hills so horrid! Phil, promise me, promise me that you'll always, always love me.

CAPT. G.—What's the trouble, darling? I can't promise any more than I have; but I'll promise that again and again if you like.

MRS. G.—(Her head on his shoulder.) Say it, then—say it! N-no—don't! The—the—eagles would laugh. (Recovering.) My husband, you've married a little goose.

CAPT. G.—(Very tenderly.) Have I? I am content whatever she is, so long as she is mine.

MRS. G.—(Quickly.) Because she is yours or because she is me mineself?

CAPT. G.—Because she is both. (Piteously.) I'm not clever, dear, and I don't think I can make myself understood properly.

MRS. G.—I understand. Pip, will you tell me something?

CAPT. G.—Anything you like. (Aside.) I wonder what's coming now.

MRS. G.—(Haltingly, her eyes lowered.) You told me once in the old days—centuries and centuries ago—that you had been engaged before. I didn't say anything—then.

CAPT. G.—(Innocently.) Why not?

MRS. G.—(Raising her eyes to his.) Because—because I was afraid of losing you, my heart. But now—tell about it—please.

CAPT. G.—There's nothing to tell. I was awf'ly old then—nearly two and twenty—and she was quite that.

MRS. G.—That means she was older than you. I shouldn't like her to have been younger. Well?

CAPT. G.—Well, I fancied myself in love and raved about a bit, and—oh, yes, by Jove! I made up poetry. Ha! Ha!

MRS. G.—You never wrote any for me! What happened?

CAPT. G.—I came out here, and the whole thing went phut. She wrote to say that there had been a mistake, and then she married.

Mrs. G.—Did she care for you much?

CAPT. G.—No. At least she didn't show it as far as I remember.

MRS. G.—As far as you remember! Do you remember her name? (Hears it and bows her head.) Thank you, my husband.

CAPT. G.—Who but you had the right? Now,

Little Featherweight, have you ever been mixed up in any dark and dismal tragedy?

MRS. G.—If you call me Mrs. Gadsby, p'raps I'll tell.

CAPT. G.—(Throwing Parade rasp into his voice.) Mrs. Gadsby, confess!

MRS. G.—Good Heavens, Phil! I never knew that you could speak in that terrible voice.

CAPT. G.—You don't know half my accomplishments yet. Wait till we are settled in the Plains, and I'll show you how I bark at my troop. You were going to say, darling?

MRS. G.—I—I don't like to, after that voice. (Tremulously.) Phil, never you dare to speak to me in that tone, whatever I may do!

CAPT. G.—My poor little love! Why, you're shaking all over. I am so sorry. Of course I never meant to upset you. Don't tell me anything. I'm a brute.

MRS. G.—No, you aren't, and I will tell. . . . There was a man.

CAPT. G.—(Lightly.) Was there? Lucky man!

MRS. G.—(In a whisper.) And I thought I cared for him.

CAPT. G.—Still luckier man! Well?

MRS. G.—And I thought I cared for him—and I didn't—and then you came—and I cared for you very, very much indeed. That's all. (Face hidden.) You aren't angry, are you?

CAPT. G.—Angry? Not in the least. (Aside.)

Good Lord, what have I done to deserve this angel?

MRS. G.—(Aside.) And he never asked for the name! How funny men are! But perhaps it's as well.

CAPT. G.—That man will go to heaven because you once thought you cared for him. Wonder if you'll ever drag me up there?

MRS. G.—(Firmly.) 'Shan't go if you don't.

CAPT. G.—Thanks. I say, Pussy, I don't know much about your religious beliefs. You were brought up to believe in a heaven and all that, weren't you?

MRS. G.—Yes. But it was a pincushion heaven, with hymn-books in all the pews.

CAPT. G.—(Wagging his head with intense conviction.) Never mind. There is a pukka heaven.

MRS. G.—Where do you bring that message from, my prophet?

CAPT. G.—Here! Because we care for each other. So it's all right.

MRS. G.—(As a troop of langurs crash through the branches.) So it's all right. But Darwin says that we came from those!

CAPT. G.—(Placidly.) Ah! Darwin was never in love with an angel. That settles it. Sstt, you brutes! Monkeys, indeed! You shouldn't read those books.

MRS. G.—(Folding her hands.) If it pleases my Lord the King to issue proclamation.

CAPT. G.—Don't, dear one. There are no orders between us. Only I'd rather you didn't. They lead to nothing, and bother poeple's heads.

MRS. G.—Like your first engagement.

CAPT. G.—(With an immense calm.) That was a necessary evil and led to you. Are you nothing?

MRS. G.—Not so very much, am I?

CAPT. G.—All this world and the next to me.

MRS. G.—(Very softly.) My boy of boys! Shall I tell you something?

CAPT. G.—Yes, if it's not dreadful—about other men.

MRS. G.—It's about my own bad little self.

CAPT. G.—Then it must be good. Go on, dear.

MRS. G.—(Slowly.) I don't know why I'm telling you, Pip; but if ever you marry again—(Interlude.) Take your hand from my mouth or I'll bite!—In the future, then remember . . . I don't know quite how to put it.

CAPT. G.—(Snorting indignantly.) Don't try. "Marry again," indeed!

MRS. G.—I must. Listen, my husband. Never, never, never tell your wife anything that you do not wish her to remember and think over all her life. Because a woman—yes, I am a woman, Sir,—can't forget.

CAPT. G.—By Jove, how do you know that?

MRS. G.—(Confusedly.) I don't. I'm only guessing. I am—I was—a silly little girl; but I feel that I know so much, oh, so very much more

than you, dearest. To begin with, I'm your wife.

CAPT. G.—So I have been led to believe.

MRS. G.—And I shall want to know every one of your secrets—to share everything you know with you. (Stares round desperately for lucidity and coherence.)

CAPT. G.—So you shall, dear, so you shall—but don't look like that.

MRS. G.—For your own sake don't stop me, Phil. I shall never talk to you in this way again. You must not tell me! At least, not now. Later on, when I'm an old matron it won't matter, but if you love me, be very good to me now; for this part of my life I shall never forget! Have I made you understand?

CAPT. G.—I think so, child. Have I said anything that you disapprove of?

MRS. G.—Will you be very angry? That—that voice, and what you said about the engagement—

CAPT. G.—But you asked to be told that, darling.

MRS. G.—And that's why you shouldn't have told me! You must be the judge, and, oh, Pip, dearly as I love you, I shan't be able to help you! I shall hinder you, and you must judge in spite of me!

CAPT. G.—(Meditatively.) We have a great many things to find out together, God help us both—say so, Pussy—but we shall understand each other better every day; and I think I'm begin-

ning to see now. How in the world did you come to know just the importance of giving me just that lead?

MRS. G.—I've told you that I don't know. Only somehow it seemed that, in all this new life, I was being guided for your sake as well as my own.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Then Mafflin was right! They know, and we—we're blind—all of us. (Lightly.) 'Getting a little beyond our depth, dear, aren't we? I'll remember, and, if I fail, let me be punished as I deserve.

MRS. G.—There shall be no punishment. We'll start into life together from here—you and I—and no one else.

CAPT. G.—And no one else. (A pause.) Your eyelashes are all wet, Sweet? Was there ever such a quaint little Absurdity?

MRS. G.—Was there ever such nonsense talked before?

CAPT. G.—(Knocking the ashes out of his pipe.) 'Tisn't what we say, it's what we don't say, that helps. And it's all the profoundest philosophy. But no one would understand—even if it were put into a book.

MRS. G.—The idea! No—only we ourselves, or people like ourselves—if there are any people like us.

CAPT. G.—(Magisterially.) All people, not like ourselves, are blind idiots.

MRS. G.—(Wiping her eyes.) Do you think,

then, that there are any people as happy as we are?

CAPT. G.—'Must be—unless we've appropriated all the happiness in the world.

MRS. G.—(Looking towards Simla.) Poor dears! Just fancy if we have!

CAPT. G.—Then we'll hang on to the whole show, for it's a great deal too jolly to lose—eh, wife o' mine?

MRS. G.—Oh, Pip, Pip! How much of you is a solemn, married man and how much a horrid, slangy schoolboy?

CAPT. G.—When you tell me how much of you was eighteen last birthday and how much is as old as the Sphinx and twice as mysterious, perhaps I'll attend to you. Lend me that banjo. The spirit moveth me to yowl at the sunset.

MRS. G.—Mind! It's not tuned. Ah! how that jars!

CAPT. G.—(Turning pegs.) It's amazingly difficult to keep a banjo to proper pitch.

MRS. G.—It's the same with all musical instruments. What shall it be?

CAPT. G.—"Vanity," and let the hills hear. (Sings through the first and half of the second verse. Turning to Mrs. G.) Now, chorus! Sing, Pussy!

BOTH TOGETHER.—(Con brio, to the horror of the monkeys who are settling for the night.)

"Vanity, all is Vanity," said Wisdom, scorning me—
I clasped my true love's tender hand and answered
frank and free—ee:—
"If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wi—ise?
(*Crescendo.*)—Vanity let it be!"

MRS. G.—(Defiantly to the gray of the evening sky.) "Vanity let it be!"

ECHO.—(From the Fagoo spur.) Let it be!

CURTAIN

FATIMA

"And you may go into every room of the house and see everything that is there, but into the Blue Room you must *not* go."—*The Story of Blue Beard.*

Scene.—The Gadsbys' bungalow in the Plains. Time, 11 A. M., on a Sunday morning. Captain Gadsby, in his shirt-sleeves, is bending over a complete set of Hussar's equipment, from saddle to picketing-rope, which is neatly spread over the floor of his study. He is smoking an unclean briar, and his forehead is puckered with thought.

Capt. G.—(To himself, fingering a head-stall.) Jack's an ass! There's enough brass on this to load a mule . . . and, if the Americans know anything about anything, it can be cut down to a bit only. 'Don't want the watering-bridle, either. Humbug! . . . Half a dozen sets of chains and pulleys for the same old horse! (Scratching his head.) Now, let's consider it all over from the beginning. By Jove, I've forgotten the scale of weights! Ne'er mind. 'Keep the bit only, and eliminate every boss from the crupper to the breastplate. No breastplate at all. Simple leather strap across the breast—like the Russians. Hi! Jack never thought of that!

MRS. G.—(Entering hastily, her hand bound in a cloth.) Oh, Pip! I've scalded my hand over that horrid, horrid Tiparee jam.

CAPT. G.—(Absently.) Eh! Wha-at?

MRS. G.—(With round-eyed reproach.) I've scalded it aw-fully! Aren't you sorry? And I did so want that jam to jam properly.

CAPT. G.—Poor little woman! Let me kiss the place and make it well. (Unrolling bandage.) Small sinner! Where's that scald. I can't see it.

MRS. G.—On the top of the little finger. There! —It's a most 'normous big burn!

CAPT. G.—(Kissing little finger.) Baby! Let Hyder look after the jam. You know I don't care for sweets.

MRS. G.—In-deed? . . . Pip!

CAPT. G.—Not of that kind, anyhow. And now run along, Minnie, and leave me to my own base devices. I'm busy.

MRS. G.—(Calmly settling herself in long chair.) So I see. What a mess you're making! Why have you brought all that smelly leather stuff into the house?

CAPT. G.—To play with. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. G.—Let me play, too. I'd like it.

CAPT. G.—I'm afraid you wouldn't, Pussy. . . . Don't you think that jam will burn, or whatever it is that jam does when it's not looked after by a clever little housekeeper?

MRS. G.—I thought you said Hyder could at-

tend to it. I left him in the veranda, stirring—when I hurt myself so.

CAPT. G.—(His eye returning to the equipment.) Po-oor little woman! . . . Three pound four and seven is three eleven, and that can be cut down to two eight, with just a lee-tle care, without weakening anything. Farriery is all rot in incompetent hands. What's the use of a shoe-case when a man's scouting? He can't stick it on with a lick—like a stamp—the shoe! Skittles!

MRS. G.—What's skittles? Pah! What is this leather cleaned with?

CAPT. G.—Cream and champagne and . . . Look here, dear, do you really want to talk to me about anything important?

MRS. G.—No. I've done my accounts, and I thought I'd like to see what you're doing.

CAPT. G.—Well, love, now you've seen and . . . Would you mind? . . . That is to say . . . Minnie, I really am busy.

MRS. G.—You want me to go?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear, for a little while. This tobacco will hang in your dress, and saddlery doesn't interest you.

MRS. G.—Everything you do interests me, Pip.

CAPT. G.—Yes, I know, I know, dear. I'll tell you all about it some day when I've put a head on this thing. In the meantime . . .

MRS. G.—I'm to be turned out of the room like a troublesome child?

CAPT. G.—No-o. I don't mean that exactly.

But, you see, I shall be tramping up and down, shifting these things to and fro, and I shall be in your way. Don't you think so?

MRS. G.—Can't I lift them about? Let me try. (Reaches forward to trooper's saddle.)

CAPT. G.—Good gracious, child, don't touch it. You'll hurt yourself. (Picking up saddle.) Little girls aren't expected to handle numdahs. Now, where would you like it put? (Holds saddle above his head.)

MRS. G.—(A break in her voice.) Nowhere, Pip, how good you are—and how strong! Oh, what's that ugly red streak inside your arm?

CAPT. G.—(Lowering saddle quickly.) Nothing. It's a mark of sorts. (Aside.) And Jack's coming to tiffin with his notions all cut and dried!

MRS. G.—I know it's a mark, but I've never seen it before. It runs all up the arm. What is it?

CAPT. G.—A cut—if you want to know.

MRS. G.—Want to know! Of course I do! I can't have my husband cut to pieces in this way. How did it come? Was it an accident! Tell me, Pip.

CAPT. G.—(Grimly.) No. 'Twasn't an accident. I got it—from a man—in Afghanistan.

MRS. G.—In action? Oh, Pip, and you never told me!

CAPT. G.—I'd forgotten all about it.

MRS. G.—Hold up your arm! What a horrid,

ugly scar! Are you sure it doesn't hurt now? How did the man give it you?

CAPT. G.—(Desperately looking at his watch.) With a knife. I came down—Old Van Loo did, that's to say—and fell on my legs, so I couldn't run. And then this man came up and began chopping at me as I sprawled.

MRS. G.—Oh, don't, don't! That's enough! . . . Well, what happened?

CAPT. G.—I couldn't get to my holster, and Mafflin came round the corner and stopped the performance.

MRS. G.—He's such a lazy man, I don't believe he did.

CAPT. G.—Don't you? I don't think the man had much doubt about it. Jack cut his head off.

MRS. G.—Cut—his—head—off! "With one below" as they say in the books?

CAPT. G.—I'm not sure. I was too interested in myself to know much about it. Anyhow, the head was off, and Jack was punching old Van Loo in the ribs to make him get up. Now you know all about it, dear and now . . .

MRS. G.—You want me to go, of course. You never told me about this, though I've been married to you for ever so long; and you never would have told me if I hadn't found out; and you never do tell me anything about yourself, or what you do, or what you take an interest in.

CAPT. G.—Darling, I'm always with you, aren't I?

MRS. G.—Always in my pocket, you were going to say. I know you are; but you are always thinking away from me.

CAPT. G.—(Trying to hide a smile.) Am I? I wasn't aware of it. I'm awf-ly sorry.

MRS. G.—(Piteously.) Oh, don't make fun of me! Pip, you know what I mean. When you are reading one of those things about Cavalry, by that idiotic Prince—why doesn't he be a Prince instead of a stable-boy?

CAPT. G.—Prince Kraft a stable-boy! Oh, my Aunt! Never mind, dear? You were going to say?

MRS. G.—It doesn't matter. You don't care for what I say. Only—only you get up and walk about the room, staring in front of you, and then Mafflin comes in to dinner, and after I'm in the drawing-room I can hear you and him talking, and talking, and talking, about things I can't understand, and—oh, I get so tired and feel so lonely!—I don't want to complain and be a trouble, Pip; but I do—indeed I do!

CAPT. G.—My poor darling! I never thought of that. Why don't you ask some nice people in to dinner?

MRS. G.—Nice people! Where am I to find them? Horrid frumps! And if I did, I shouldn't be amused. You know I only want you.

CAPT. G.—And you have me surely, Sweetheart?

MRS. G.—I have not! Pip, why don't you take me into your life?

CAPT. G.—More than I do? That would be difficult, dear.

MRS. G.—Yes, I suppose it would—to you. I'm no help to you—no companion to you; and you like to have it so.

CAPT. G.—Aren't you a little unreasonable, Pussy?

MRS. G.—(Stamping her foot.) I'm the most reasonable woman in the world—when I'm treated properly.

CAPT. G.—And since when have I been treating you improperly?

MRS. G.—Always—and since the beginning. You know you have.

CAPT. G.—I don't. But I'm willing to be convinced.

MRS. G.—(Pointing to saddlery.) There!

CAPT. G.—How do you mean?

MRS. G.—What does all that mean? Why am I not to be told? Is it so precious?

CAPT. G.—I forget its exact Government value just at present. It means that it is a great deal too heavy.

MRS. G.—Then why do you touch it?

CAPT. G.—To make it lighter. See here, little love, I've one notion and Jack has another, but we are both agreed that all this equipment is about thirty pounds too heavy. The thing is how to cut it down without weakening any part of it, and,

at the same time, allowing the trooper to carry everything he wants for his own comfort—socks and shirts and things of that kind.

MRS. G.—Why doesn't he pack them in a little trunk?

CAPT. G.—(kissing her.) Oh, you darling! Pack them in a little trunk, indeed! Hussars don't carry trunks, and it's a most important thing to make the horse do all the carrying.

MRS. G.—But why need you bother about it? You're not a trooper.

CAPT. G.—No; but I command a few score of him; and equipment is nearly everything in these days.

MRS. G.—More than me?

CAPT. G.—Stupid! Of course not; but it's a matter that I'm tremendously interested in, because if I or Jack, or I and Jack, hack out some sort of lighter saddlery and all that, it's possible that we may get it adopted.

MRS. G.—How?

CAPT. G.—Sanctioned at Home, where they will make a sealed pattern—a pattern that all the saddlers must copy—and so it will be used by all the regiments.

MRS. G.—And that interests you?

CAPT. G.—It's part of my profession, y'know and my profession is a good deal to me. Everything in a soldier's equipment is important, and if we can improve that equipment, so much the better for the soldiers and for us.

MRS. G.—Who's "us"?

CAPT. G.—Jack and I, though Jack's notions are too radical. What's that big sigh for, Minnie?

MRS. G.—Oh, nothing . . . and you've kept all this a secret from me! Why?

CAPT. G.—Not a secret, exactly, dear. I didn't say anything about it to you because I didn't think it would amuse you.

MRS. G.—And am I only made to be amused?

CAPT. G.—No, of course. I merely mean that it couldn't interest you.

MRS. G.—It's your work and—and if you'd let me, I'd count all these things up. If they are two heavy, you know by how much they are too heavy, and you must have a list of things made out to your scale of lightness, and—

CAPT. G.—I have got both scales somewhere in my head; but it's hard to tell how light you can make a headstall, for instance, until you've actually had a model made.

MRS. G.—But if you read out the list, I could copy it down, and pin it up there just above your table. Wouldn't that do?

CAPT. G.—It would be awf'ly nice, dear, but it would be giving you trouble for nothing. I can't work that way. I go by rule of thumb. I know the present scale of weights, and the other one—the one that I'm trying to work to—will shift and vary so much that I couldn't be certain, even if I wrote it down.

MRS. G.—I'm so sorry. I thought I might

help. Is there anything else that I could be of use in?

CAPT. G.—(Looking round the room.) I can't think of anything. You're always helping me, you know.

MRS. G.—Am I? How?

CAPT. G.—You are you of course, and as long as you're near me—I can't explain exactly, but it's in the air.

MRS. G.—And that's why you wanted to send me away?

CAPT. G.—That's only when I'm trying to do work—grubby work like this.

MRS. G.—Mafflin's better, then, isn't he?

CAPT. G.—(Rashly.) Of course he is. Jack and I have been thinking down the same groove for two or three years about this equipment. It's our hobby, and it may really be useful some day.

MRS. G.—(After a pause.) And that's all that you have away from me?

CAPT. G.—It isn't very far away from you now. Take care that the oil on that bit doesn't come off on your dress.

MRS. G.—I wish—I wish so much that I could really help you. I believe I could . . . if I left the room. But that's not what I mean.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Give me patience! I wish she would go. (Aloud.) I assure you you can't do anything for me, Minnie, and I must really settle down to this. Where's my pouch?

MRS. G.—(Crossing to writing-table.) Here

you are, Bear. What a mess you keep your table in!

CAPT. G.—Don't touch it. There's a method in my madness, though you mightn't think it.

MRS. G.—(At table.) I want to look. . . . Do you keep accounts, Pip?

CAPT. G.—(Bending over saddlery.) Of a sort. Are you rummaging among the Troop papers? Be careful.

MRS. G.—Why? I sha'n't disturb anything. Good gracious! I had no idea that you had any thing to do with so many sick horses.

CAPT. G.—'Wish I hadn't, but they insist on falling sick. Minnie, if I were you I really should not investigate those papers. You may come across something that you won't like.

MRS. G.—Will you always treat me like a child? I know I'm not displacing the horrid things.

CAPT. G.—(Resignedly.) Very well, then. Don't blame me if anything happens. Play with the table and let me go on with the saddlery. (Slipping hand into trousers-pocket.) Oh, the deuce!

MRS. G.—(Her back to G.) What's that for?

CAPT. G.—Nothing. (Aside.) There's not much of importance in it, but I wish I'd torn it up.

MRS. G.—(Turning over contents of table.) I know you'll hate me for this; but I do want to see what your work is like. (A pause.) Pip, what are "farcy-buds"?

CAPT. G.—Hah! Would you really like to know? They aren't pretty things.

MRS. G.—This Journal of Veterinary Science says they are of "absorbing interest." Tell me.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) It may turn her attention. Gives a long and designedly loathsome account of glanders and farcy.

MRS. G.—Oh, that's enough. Don't go on!

CAPT. G.—But you wanted to know. . . . Then these things supperate and matterate and spread—

MRS. G.—Pip, you're making me sick! You're a horrid, disgusting schoolboy.

CAPT. G.—(On his knees among the bridles.) You asked to be told. It's not my fault if you worry me into talking about horrors.

MRS. G.—Why didn't you say—No?

CAPT. G.—Good Heavens, child? Have you come in here simply to bully me?

MRS. G.—I bully you? How could I! You're so strong. (Hysterically.) Strong enough to pick me up and put me outside the door, and leave me there to cry. Aren't you?

CAPT. G.—It seems to me that you're an irrational little baby. Are you quite well?

MRS. G.—Do I look ill? (Returning to table.) Who is your lady friend with the big gray envelope and the fat monogram outside?

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Then it wasn't in the drawers, confound it. (Aloud.) "God made her, therefore let her pass for a woman." You remember what farcy-buds are like?

MRS. G.—(Showing envelope.) This has nothing to do with them. I'm going to open it. May I?

CAPT. G.—Certainly, if you want to. I'd rather you didn't, though. I don't ask to look at your letters to the Deercourt girl.

MRS. G.—You'd better not, Sir! (Takes letter from envelope.) Now, may I look? If you say no, I shall cry.

CAPT. G.—You've never cried in my knowledge of you, and I don't believe you could.

MRS. G.—I feel very like it to-day, Pip. Don't be hard on me. (Reads letter.) It begins in the middle, without any "Dear Captain Gadsby," or anything. How funny!

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) No, it's not Dear Captain Gadsby, or anything, now. How funny!

MRS. G.—What a strange letter! (Reads.) "And so the moth has come too near the candle at last, and has been singed into—shall I say Respectability? I congratulate him, and hope he will be as happy as he deserves to be." What does that mean? Is she congratulating you about our marriage?

CAPT. G.—Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. G.—(Still reading letter.) She seems to be a particular friend of yours.

CAPT. G.—Yes. She was an excellent matron of sorts—a Mrs. Herriott—wife of a Colonel Herriott. I used to know some of her people at Home long ago—before I came out.

MRS. G.—Some Colonel's wives are young—as young as me. I knew one who was younger.

CAPT. G.—Then it couldn't have been Mrs. Herriott. She was old enough to have been your mother, dear.

MRS. G.—I remember now. Mrs. Scargill was talking about her at the Duffins' tennis, before you came for me, on Tuesday. Captain Mafflin said she was a "dear old woman." Do you know, I think Mafflin is a very clumsy man with his feet.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) Good old Jack! (Aloud.) Why, dear?

MRS. G.—He had put his cup down on the ground then, and he literally stepped into it. Some of the tea spurted over my dress—the gray one. I meant to tell you about it before.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) There are the makings of a strategist about Jack, though his methods are coarse. (Aloud.) You'd better get a new dress, then. (Aside.) Let us pray that that will turn her.

MRS. G.—Oh, it isn't stained in the least. I only thought that I'd tell you. (Returning to letter.) What an extraordinary person! (Reads.) "But need I remind you that you have taken upon yourself a charge of wardship"—what in the world is a charge of wardship?—"which, as you yourself know, may end in Consequences." . . .

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) It's safest to let 'em see everything as they come across it; but 'seems to me that there are exceptions to the rule. (Aloud.)

I told you that there was nothing to be gained from rearranging my table.

MRS. G.—(Absently.) What does the woman mean? She goes on talking about Consequences —"almost inevitable Consequences" with a capital C—for half a page. (Flushing scarlet.) Oh, good gracious! How abominable!

CAPT. G.—(Promptly.) Do you think so? Doesn't it show a sort of motherly interest in us? (Aside.) Thank Heaven, Harry always wrapped her meaning up safely. (Aloud.) Is it absolutely necessary to go on with the letter, darling?

MRS. G.—It's impertinent—it's simply horrid. What right has this woman to write in this way to you? She oughtn't to.

CAPT. G.—When you write to the Deercourt girl, I notice that you generally fill three or four sheets. Can't you let an old woman babble on paper once in a way? She means well.

MRS. G.—I don't care. She shouldn't write, and if she did, you ought to have shown me her letter.

CAPT. G.—Can't you understand why I kept it to myself, or must I explain at length—as I explained the farcy-buds?

MRS. G.—(Furiously.) Pip, I hate you! This is as bad as those idiotic saddle-bags on the floor. Never mind whether it would please me or not, you ought to have given it to me to read.

CAPT. G.—It comes to the same thing. You took it yourself.

MRS. G.—Yes, but if I hadn't taken it, you wouldn't have said a word. I think this Harriet Herriott—it's like a name in a book—is an interfering old Thing.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) So long as you thoroughly understand that she is old, I don't much care what you think. (Aloud.) Very good, dear. Would you like to write and tell her so? She's seven thousand miles away.

MRS. G.—I don't want to have anything to do with her, but you ought to have told me. (Turning to last page of letter.) And she patronizes me, too. I've never seen her! (Reads.) "I do not know how the world stands with you. In all human probability I shall never know; but whatever I may have said before, I pray for her sake more than for yours that all may be well. I have learnt what misery means, and I dare not wish that any one dear to you should share my knowledge."

CAPT. G.—Good God! Can't you leave that letter alone, or, at least, can't you refrain from reading it aloud? I've been through it once. Put it back on the desk. Do you hear me?

MRS. G.—(Irresolutely.) I sh—shan't (Looks at G.'s eyes.) Oh, Pip, please! I didn't mean to make you angry—'Deed, I didn't. Pip, I'm sorry. I know I've wasted you time. . . .

CAPT. G.—(Grimly.) You have. Now, will you be good enough to go . . . if there is nothing

more in my room that you are anxious to pry into?

MRS. G.—(Putting out her hands.) Oh, Pip, don't look at me like that! I've never seen you look like that before and it hu-urts me! I'm sorry. I oughtn't to have been here at all, and—and—(sobbing.) Oh, be good to me! Be good to me! There's only you—anywhere!

Breaks down in long chair, hiding face in cushions.

CAPT. G.—(Aside.) She doesn't know how she flicked me on the raw. (Aloud, bending over chair.) I didn't mean to be harsh, dear—I didn't really. You can stay here as long as you please, and do what you please. Don't cry like that. You'll make yourself sick. (Aside.) What on earth has come over her? (Aloud.) Darling, what's the matter with you?

MRS. G.—(Her face still hidden.) Let me go—let me go to my own room. Only—only say you aren't angry with me.

CAPT. G.—Angry with you, love! Of course not. I was angry with myself. I'd lost my temper over the saddlery. . . . Don't hide your face, Pussy. I want to kiss it.

Bends lower, MRS. G. slides right arm round his neck. Several interludes and much sobbing.

MRS. G.—(In a whisper.) I didn't mean about the jam when I came in to tell you—

CAPT. G.—Bother the jam and the equipment! (Interlude.)

MRS. G.—(Still more faintly.) My finger wasn't scalded at all. I—I wanted to speak to you about—about—something else, and—I didn't know how.

CAPT. G.—Speak away, then. (Looking into her eyes.) Eh! Wha-at? Minnie! Here, don't go away! You don't mean?

MRS. G.—(Hysterically, backing to portière and hiding her face in its folds.) The—the Almost Inevitable Consequences! (Flits through the portière as G. attempts to catch her, and bolts herself in her own room.)

CAPT. G.—(His arms full of portière.) Oh! (Sitting down heavily in chair.) I'm a brute —a pig—a bully, and a blackguard. My poor, poor little darling! "Made to be amused only!" . . .

CURTAIN

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

"KNOWING Good and Evil."

SCENE.—The Gadsbys' bungalow in the Plains, in June. Punkah-coolies asleep in veranda where CAPT. GADSBY is walking up and down. DOCTOR's trap in porch. JUNIOR CHAPLAIN fluctuating generally and uneasily through the house. Time, 3.40 A. M. Heat 94° in veranda.

DOCTOR.—(Coming into veranda and touching G. on the shoulder.) You had better go in and see her now.

CAPT. G.—(The color of good cigar-ash.) Eh, wha-at? Oh, yes, of course. What did you say?

DOCTOR.—(Syllable by syllable.) Go—in—to—the—room—and—see—her. She wants to speak to you. (Aside, testily.) I shall have him on my hands next.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(In half-lighted dining-room.) Isn't there any—?

DOCTOR.—(Savagely.) Hsh, you little fool!

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—Let me do my work. Gadsby, stop a minute! (Edges after G.)

DOCTOR.—Wait till she sends for you at least

—at least. Man alive, he'll kill you if you go in there! What are you bothering him for?

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(Coming into veranda.) I've given him a stiff brandy-peg. He wants it. You've forgotten him for the last ten hours and—forgotten yourself too.

G. enters bedroom, which is lit by one night-light. Ayah on the floor pretending to be asleep.

VOICE.—(From the bed.) All down the street—such bonfires! Ayah, go and put them out! (Appealingly.) How can I sleep with an installation of the C. I. E. in my room? No—not C. I. E. Something else. What was it?

CAPT. G.—(Trying to control his voice.) Minnie, I'm here. (Bending over bed.) Don't you know me, Minnie? It's me—it's Phil—it's your husband.

VOICE.—(Mechanically.) It's me—it's Phil—it's your husband.

CAPT. G.—She doesn't know me! . . . It's your own husband, darling.

VOICE.—Your own husband, darling.

AYAH.—(With an inspiration.) Memsahib understanding all I saying.

CAPT. G.—Make her understand me then—quick!

AYAH.—(Hand on MRS. G.'s forehead.) Memsahib! Captain Sahib aya.

VOICE.—Salam do. (Fretfully.) I know I'm not fit to be seen.

AYAH.—(Aside to G.) Say "marneen" same as at breakfash.

CAPT. G.—Good morning, little woman. How are we to-day?

VOICE.—That's Phil. Poor old Phil. (Viciously.) Phil, you fool, I can't see you. Come nearer.

CAPT. G.—Minnie! Minnie! It's me—you know me?

VOICE.—(Mockingly.) Of course I do. Who does not know the man who was so cruel to his wife—almost the only one he ever had?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear. Yes—of course, of course. But won't you speak to him? He wants to speak to you so much.

VOICE.—They'd never let him in. The Doctor would give darwaza band even if he were in the house. He'll never come. (Despairingly.) Oh, Judas! Judas! Judas!

CAPT. G.—(Putting out his arms.) They have let him in, and he always was in the house. Oh, my love—don't you know me?

VOICE,—(In a half chant.) "And it came to pass at the eleventh hour that this poor soul repented." It knocked at the gates, but they were shut—tight as a plaster—a great, burning plaster. They had pasted our marriage certificate all across the door, and it was made of red-hot iron—people really ought to be more careful, you know.

CAPT. G.—What am I to do? (Takes her in his arms.) Minnie! speak to me—to Phil.

VOICE.—What shall I say? Oh, tell me what to say before it's too late! They are all going away and I can't say anything.

CAPT. G.—Say you know me! Only say you know me!

DOCTOR.—(Who has entered quietly.) For pity's sake don't take it too much to heart, Gadsby. It's this way sometimes. They won't recognize. They say all sorts of queer things—don't you see?

CAPT. G.—All right! All right! Go away now; she'll recognize me; you're bothering her. She must—mustn't she, Doc?

DOCTOR.—She will before . . . Have I your leave to try—

CAPT. G.—Anything you please, so long as she'll know me. It's only a question of—hours, isn't it?

DOCTOR.—(Professionally.) While there's life there's hope, y'know. But don't build on it.

CAPT. G.—I don't. Pull her together if it's possible. (Aside.) What have I done to deserve this?

DOCTOR.—(Bending over bed.) Now, Mrs. Gadsby! We shall be all right to-morrow. You must take it, or I shan't let Phil see you. It isn't nasty, is it?

VOICE.—Medicines! Always more medicines! Can't you leave me alone?

CAPT. G.—Oh, leave her in peace, Doc!

DOCTOR.—(Stepping back,—aside.) May I be forgiven if I've done wrong. (Aloud.) In a

few minutes she ought to be sensible; but I daren't tell you to look for anything. It's only—

CAPT. G.—What? Go on, man.

DOCTOR.—(In a whisper.) Forcing the last rally.

CAPT. G.—Then leave us alone.

DOCTOR.—Don't mind what she says at first, if you can. They . . . they . . . they turn against those they love most sometimes in this . . . It's hard, but . . .

CAPT. G.—Am I her husband or are you? Leave us alone whatever time we have together.

VOICE.—(Confidentially.) And we were engaged quite suddenly, Emma. I assure you that I never thought of it for a moment; but O my little Me!—I don't know what I should have done if he hadn't proposed.

CAPT. G.—She thinks of that Deercourt girl before she thinks of me. (Aloud.) Minnie!

VOICE.—Not from the shops, Mummy dear. You can get the real leaves from Kaintu, and (laughing weakly) never mind about the blossoms . . . Dead white silk is only fit for widows, and I won't wear it. It's as bad as a winding-sheet. (A long pause.)

CAPT. G.—I never asked a favor yet. If there is anybody to listen to me, let her know me—even if I die too!

VOICE.—(Very faintly.) Pip, Pip dear.

CAPT. G.—I'm here, darling.

VOICE.—What has happened? They've been

bothering me so with medicines and things, and they wouldn't let you come and see me. I was never ill before. Am I ill now?

CAPT. G.—You—you aren't quite well.

VOICE.—How funny. Have I been ill long?

CAPT. G.—Some days; but you'll be all right in a little time.

VOICE.—Do you think so, Pip? I don't feel well and . . . Oh! what have they done to my hair?

CAPT. G.—I d-d-don't know.

VOICE.—They've cut it off. What a shame!

CAPT. G.—It must have been to make your head cooler.

VOICE.—'Just like a boy's wig. Don't I look horrid?

CAPT. G.—Never looked prettier in your life, dear. (Aside.) How am I to ask her to say good-by?

VOICE.—I don't feel pretty. I feel very ill. My heart won't work. It's nearly dead inside me, and there's a funny feeling in my eyes. Everything seems the same distance—you and the almirah and the table—inside my eyes are miles away. What does it mean, Pip?

CAPT. G.—You're a little feverish, Sweetheart—very feverish. (Breaking down.) My love! my love! How can I let you go?

VOICE.—I thought so. Why didn't you tell me that at first?

CAPT. G.—What?

VOICE.—That I am going to . . . die.

CAPT. G.—But you aren't! You sha'n't.

AYAH.—(Stepping into veranda after a glance at the bed.) Punkah chor do!

VOICE.—It's hard, Pip. So very, very hard after one year—just one year. (Wailing.) And I'm only twenty. Most girls aren't even married at twenty. Can't they do anything to help me? I don't want to die.

CAPT. G.—Hush, dear. You won't.

VOICE.—What's the use of talking? Help me! You've never failed me yet. Oh, Phil, help me to keep alive. (Feverishly.) I don't believe you wish me to live. You weren't a bit sorry when that horrid Baby thing died. I wish I'd killed Baby!

CAPT. G.—(Drawing his hand across his forehead. It's more than a man's meant to bear—it's not right. (Aloud.) Minnie, love. I'd die for you if it would help.

VOICE.—No more death. There's enough already. Pip, don't you die too.

CAPT. G.—I wish I dared.

VOICE.—It says:—"Till Death do us part." Nothing after that . . . and so it would be no use. It stops at the dying. Why does it stop there? Only such a very short life, too. Pip, I'm sorry we married.

CAPT. G.—No! Anything but that, Min!

VOICE.—Because you'll forget and I'll forget. Oh, Pip, don't forget! I always loved you, though

I was cross sometimes. If I ever did anything that you didn't like, say you forgive me now.

CAPT. G.—You never did, darling. On my soul and honor you never did. I haven't a thing to forgive you.

VOICE.—I sulked for a whole week about those petunias. (With a laugh.) What a little wretch I was, and how grieved you were! Forgive me that, Pip.

CAPT. G.—There's nothing to forgive. It was my fault. They were too near the drive. For God's sake don't talk so, Minnie! There's such a lot to say and so little time to say it in.

VOICE.—Say that you'll always love me—until the end.

CAPT. G.—Until the end. (Carried away.) It's a lie. It must be, because we've loved each other. This isn't the end.

VOICE.—(Relapsing into semi-delirium.) My Church-service has an ivory cross on the back, and it says so, so it must be true. "Till death do us part." . . . But that's a lie. (With a parody of G.'s manner.) A damned lie! (Recklessly.) Yes, I can swear as well as Trooper Pip. I can't make my head think, though. That's because they cut off my hair. How can one think with one's head all fuzzy? (Pleadingly.) Hold me, Pip! Keep me with you always and always. (Relapsing.) But if you marry the Thorniss girl when I'm dead, I'll come back and howl under our bedroom window all night. Oh, bother!

You'll think I'm a jackal. Pip, what time is it?

CAPT. G.—A little before the dawn, dear.

VOICE.—I wonder where I shall be this time to-morrow?

CAPT. G.—Would you like to see the Padre?

VOICE.—Why should I? He'd tell me that I'm going to heaven; and that wouldn't be true, because you are here.—Do you recollect when he upset the cream-ice all over his trousers at the Gassers' tennis?

CAPT. G.—Yes, dear.

VOICE.—I often wondered whether he got another pair of trousers; but then his are so shiny all over that you really couldn't tell unless you were told. Let's call him in and ask.

CAPT. G.—(Gravely.) No. I don't think he'd like that. 'Your head comfy, Sweetheart?

VOICE.—(Faintly with a sigh of contentment.) Yeth! Gracious, Pip, when did you shave last? Your chin's worse than the barrel of a musical box. . . . No, don't lift it up. I like it. (A pause.) You said you've never cried at all. You're crying all over my cheek.

CAPT. G.—I—I—I can't help it, dear.

VOICE.—How funny! I couldn't cry now to save my life. (G. shivers.) I want to sing.

CAPT. G.—Won't it tire you? 'Better not, perhaps.

VOICE.—Why? I won't be ordered about! (Begins in a hoarse quaver):—

Minnie bakes oaken cake, Minnie brews ale,
All because her Johnnie's coming home from the sea.
(That's parade, Pip).
And she grows red as a rose who was so pale:
And "Are you sure the church clock goes?" says she.

(Pettishly.) I knew I couldn't take the last note. How do the bass chords run? (Puts out her hands and begins playing piano on the sheet.)

CAPT. G.—(Catching up hands.) Ah! don't do that, Pussy, if you love me.

VOICE.—Love you? Of course I do. Who else should it be? (A pause.)

VOICE.—(Very clearly.) Pip, I'm going now. Something's choking me cruelly. (Indistinctly.) Into the dark . . . without you, my heart. . . . But it's a lie, dear. . . . We mustn't believe it. . . . For ever and ever, living or dead. Don't let me go, my husband—hold me tight. . . . They can't . . . whatever happens. (A cough.) Pip—my Pip! Not for always . . . and . . . so . . . soon! (Voice ceases.)

Pause of ten minutes. G. buries his face in the side of the bed while Ayah bends over bed from opposite side and feels MRS. G.'s breast and forehead.

CAPT. G.—(Rising.) Doctor Sahib ko salaam do.

AYAH.—(Still by bedside, with a shriek.) Ai! Ai! Tuta—phuta! My Memsahib! Not getting—not have got—Pusseena agya! (Fiercely to G.) TUM jao Doctor Sahib ko jaldi! Oh! my Memsahib!

DOCTOR.—(Entering hastily.) Come away, Gadsby. (Bends over bed) Eh? The Dev— What inspired you to stop the punkah? Get out, man—go away—wait outside! Go! Here, Ayah! (Over his shoulder to G.) Mind, I promise nothing.

The dawn breaks as G. stumbles into the garden.

CAPT. M.—(Reigning up at the gate on his way to parade and very soberly.) Old man, how goes?

CAPT. G.—(Dazed.) I don't quite know. Stay a bit. Have a drink or something. Don't run away. You're just getting amusing. Ha! Ha!

CAPT. M.—(Aside.) What am I let in for? Gaddy has aged ten years in the night.

CAPT. G.—(Slowly, fingering charger's headstall.) Your curb's too loose.

CAPT. M.—So it is. Put it straight, will you? (Aside.) I shall be late for parade. Poor Gaddy!

CAPT. G. links and unlinks curb-chain aimlessly, and finally stands staring towards the veranda. The day brightens.

DOCTOR.—(Knocked out of professional gravity, tramping across flower-beds and shaking G's hands.) It's—it's—it's!—Gadsby, there's a fair chance—a dashed fair chance! The flicker, y'know. The sweat, y'know! I saw how it would be. The punkah, y'know. Deuced clever woman that Ayah of yours. Just at the right time. A dashed good chance! No—you don't go in. We'll pull her through yet. I promise on my reputation —under Providence. Send a man with this note to

Bingle. Two heads better than one. 'Specially the Ayah! We'll pull her round. (Retreats hastily to house.)

CAPT. G.—(His head on neck of M.'s charger.) Jack! I bub—bub—believe, I'm going to make a bub—bub—bloody exhibition of byself.

CAPT. M.—(Sniffing openly and feeling in his left cuff.) I b-b—believe I'b doing it already. Old bad, what cad I say? I'b as pleased as—Cod dab you, Gaddy! You're one big idiot and I'b adother. (Pulling himself together.) Sit tight! Here comes the Devil dodger.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(Who is not in the Doctor's confidence.) We—we are only men in these things, Gadsby. I know that I can say nothing now to help—

CAPT. M.—(Jealously.) Then don't say it! Leave him alone. It's not bad enough to croak over. Here, Gaddy, take the chit to Bingle and ride hell-for-leather. It'll do you good. I can't go.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—Do him good! (Smiling.) Give me the chit and I'll drive. Let him lie down. Your horse is blocking my cart—please!

CAPT. M.—(Slowly, without reigning back.) I beg your pardon—I'll apologize. On paper if you like.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN.—(Flicking M.'s charger.) That'll do, thanks. Turn in, Gadsby, and I'll bring Bingle back—ahem—"hell-for-leather."

CAPT. M.—(Solus.) It would ha' served me

right if he had cut me across the face. He can drive too. I shouldn't care to go that pace in a bamboo cart. What a faith he must have in his Maker—of harness! Come hup, you brute! (Gallops off to parade, blowing his nose, as the sun rises.)

INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.

MRS. G.—(Very white and pinched, in morning wrapper at breakfast table.) How big and strange the room looks, and oh, how glad I am to see it again! What dust, though! I must talk to the servants. Sugar, Pip? I've almost forgotten. (Seriously.) Wasn't I very ill?

CAPT. G.—Iller than I liked. (Tenderly.) Oh, you bad little Pussy, what a start you gave me!

MRS. G.—I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G.—You'd better not. And now get those poor pale cheeks pink again, or I shall be angry. Don't try to lift the urn. You'll upset it. Wait. (Comes round to head of table and lifts urn.)

MRS. G.—(Quickly.) Khitmatgar, bow-archi-khana se kettly lao. (Drawing down G.'s face to her own.) Pip, dear, I remember.

CAPT. G.—What?

MRS. G.—That last terrible night.

CAPT. G.—Then just you forget all about it.

MRS. G.—(Softly, her eyes filling.) Never. It has brought us very close together, my husband.

There! (Interlude.) I'm going to give Junda a saree.

CAPT. G.—I gave her fifty dibs.

MRS. G.—So she told me. It was a 'normous reward. Was I worth it? (Several interludes.) Don't! Here's the khitmatgar.—Two lumps or one, Sir?

CURTAIN.

THE SWELLING OF JORDAN

"If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they have wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

SCENE.—The Gadsbys' bungalow in the Plains, on a January morning. MRS. G. arguing with bearer in back veranda. CAPT. M. rides up.

CAPT. M.—'Mornin', Mrs. Gadsby. How's the Infant Phenomenon and the Proud Proprietor?

MRS. G.—You'll find them in the front veranda; go through the house. I'm Martha just now.

CAPT. M.—'Cumbered about with cares of khitmatgars? I fly.

Passes into front veranda where GADSBY is watching GADSBY JUNIOR, ætate ten months, crawling about the matting.

CAPT. M.—What's the trouble, Gaddy—spoiling an honest man's Europe morning this way? (Seeing G. JUNIOR.) By Jove, that yearling's comin' on amazingly! Any amount of bone below the knee there.

CAPT. G.—Yes, he's a healthy little scoundrel. Don't you think his hair's growing?

M.—Let's have a look. Hi! Hst! Come here, General Luck, and we'll report on you.

MRS. G.—(Within.) What absurd name will you give him next? Why do you call him that?

M.—Isn't he our Inspector-General of Cavalry? Doesn't he come down in his seventeen-two perambulator every morning the Pink Hussars parade? Don't wriggle, Brigadier. Give us your private opinion on the way the third squadron went past. 'Trifle ragged, weren't they?

G.—A bigger set of tailors than the new draft I don't wish to see. They've given me more than my fair share—knocking the squadron out of shape. It's sickening!

M.—When you're in command, you'll do better, young 'un. Can't you walk yet? Grip my finger and try. (To G.) 'Twon't hurt his hocks, will it?

G.—Oh, no. Don't let him flop, though, or he'll lick all the blacking off your boots.

MRS. G.—(Within.) Who's destroying my son's character?

M.—And my Godson's. I'm ashamed of you, Gaddy. Punch your father in the eye, Jack! Don't you stand it! Hit him again!

G.—(Sotto voce.) Put The Butcha down and come to the end of the veranda. I'd rather the Wife didn't hear—just now.

M.—You look awf'ly serious. Anything wrong?

G.—'Depends on your view entirely. I say, Jack, you won't think more hardly of me than you can help, will you? Come further this way.

. . . The fact of the matter is that I've made up my mind—at least I'm thinking seriously of . . . cutting the Service.

M.—Hwhatt?

G.—Don't shout. I'm going to send in my papers.

M.—You! Are you mad?

G.—No—only married.

M.—Look here! What's the meaning of it all? You never intend to leave us. You can't. Isn't the best squadron of the best regiment of the best cavalry in all the world good enough for you?

G.—(Jerking his head over his shoulder.) She doesn't seem to thrive in this God-forsaken country, and there's the Butcha to be considered and all that, you know.

M.—Does she say that she doesn't like India?

G.—That's the worst of it. She won't for fear of leaving me.

M.—What are the Hills made for?

G.—Not for my wife, at any rate.

M.—You know too much, Gaddy, and—I don't like you any the better for it!

G.—Never mind that. She wants England, and the Butcha would be all the better for it. I'm going to chuck. You don't understand.

M.—(Hotly.) I understand this. One hundred and thirty-seven new horses to be licked into shape somehow before Luck comes round again; a hairy-heeled draft who'll give more trouble than the horses; a camp next cold weather for a

certainty; ourselves the first on the roster; the Russian shindy ready to come to a head at five minutes' notice, and you, the best of us all, backing out of it all! Think a little, Gaddy. You won't do it.

G.—Hang it, a man has some duties towards his family, I suppose.

M.—I remember a man, though, who told me, the night after Amdheran, when we were picketed under Jagai, and he'd left his sword—by the way, did you ever pay Ranken for that sword?—in an Utmanzai's head—that man told me that he'd stick by me and the Pinks as long as he lived. I don't blame him for not sticking by me—I'm not much of a man—but I do blame him for not sticking by the Pink Hussars.

G.—(Uneasily.) We were little more than boys then. Can't you see, Jack, how things stand? 'Tisn't as if we were serving for our bread. We've all of us, more or less, got the filthy lucre. I'm luckier than some, perhaps. There's no call for me to serve on.

M.—None in the world for you or for us, except the Regimental. If you don't choose to answer to that, of course. . . .

G.—Don't be too hard on a man. You know that a lot of us only take up the thing for a few years and then go back to Town and catch on with the rest.

M.—Not lots, and they aren't some of Us.

G.—And then there are one's affairs at Home

to be considered—my place and the rents, and all that. I don't suppose my father can last much longer, and that means the title, and so on.

M.—'Fraid you won't be entered in the Stud Book correctly unless you go Home? Take six months, then, and come out in October. If I could slay off a brother or two, I s'pose I should be a Marquis of sorts. Any fool can be that; but it needs men, Gaddy—men like you—to lead flanking squadrons properly. Don't you delude yourself into the belief that you're going Home to take your place and prance about among pink-nosed Cabuli dowagers. You aren't built that way. I know better.

G.—A man has a right to live his life as happily as he can. You aren't married.

M.—No—praise be to Providence and the one or two women who have had the good sense to jawab me.

G.—Then you don't know what it is to go into your own room and see your wife's head on the pillow, and when everything else is safe and the house bunded up for the night, to wonder whether the roof-beams won't give and kill her.

M.—(Aside.) Revelations first and second! (Aloud.) So-o! I knew a man who got squiffy at our Mess once and confided to me that he never helped his wife on to her horse without praying that she'd break her neck before she came back. All husbands aren't alike, you see.

G.—What on earth has that to do with my

case? The man must ha' been mad, or his wife as bad as they make 'em.

M.—(Aside.) 'No fault of yours if either weren't all you say. You've forgotten the time when you were insane about the Herriott woman. You always were a good hand at forgetting. (Aloud.) Not more mad than men who go to the other extreme. Be reasonable, Gaddy. Your roof-beams are sound enough.

G.—That was only a way of speaking. I've been uneasy and worried about the Wife ever since that awful business three years ago—when —I nearly lost her. Can you wonder?

M.—Oh, a shell never falls twice in the same place. You've paid your toll to misfortune—why should your Wife be picked out more than anybody else's?

G.—I can talk just as reasonably as you can, but you don't understand—you don't understand. And then there's The Butcha. Deuce knows where the Ayah takes him to sit in the evening! He has a bit of a cough. Haven't you noticed it?

M.—Bosh! The Brigadier's jumping out of his skin with pure condition. He's got a muzzle like a rose-leaf and the chest of a two-year old. What's demoralized you?

G.—Funk. That's the long and short of it. Funk!

M.—But what is there to funk?

G.—Everything. It's ghastly.

M.—Ah! I see.

"You don't want to fight,
And by Jingo when we do,
You've got the kid, you've got the Wife,
You've got the money, too."

That's about the case, eh?

G.—I suppose that's it. But it's not for myself. It's because of them. At least, I think it is.

M.—Are you sure? Looking at the matter in a cold-blooded light, the Wife is provided for even if you were wiped out to-night. She has an ancestral home to go to, money, and the Brigadier to carry on the illustrious name.

G.—Then it is for myself or because they are part of me. You don't see it. My life's so good, so pleasant, as it is, that I want to make it quite safe. Can't you understand?

M.—Perfectly. "Shelter-pit for the Orf'cer's charger," as they say in the Line.

G.—And I have everything to my hand to make it so. I'm sick of the strain and the worry for their sakes out here; and there isn't a single real difficulty to prevent my dropping it altogether. It'll only cost me . . . Jack, I hope you'll never know the shame that I've been going through for the past six months.

M.—Hold on there! I don't wish to be told. Every man has his moods and tenses sometimes.

G.—(Laughing bitterly.) Has he? What do you call craning over to see where the nearfore lands?

M.—In my case it means that I have been on

the Considerable Bend, and have come to parade with a Head and a Hand. It passes in three strides.

G.—(Lowering voice.) It never passes with me, Jack. I'm always thinking about it. Phil Gadsby funking a fall on parade! Sweet picture, isn't it! Draw it for me.

M.—(Gravely.) Heaven forbid! A man like you can't be as bad as that. A fall is no nice thing, but one never gives it a thought.

G.—Doesn't one? Wait till you've got a wife and a youngster of your own, and then you'll know how the roar of the squadron behind you turns you cold all up the back.

M.—(Aside.) And this man led at Amdheran after Bagal-Deasin went under, and we were all mixed up together, and he came out of the show dripping like a butcher! (Aloud.) Skittles! The men can always open out, and you can always pick your way more or less. We haven't the dust to bother us, as the men have, and whoever heard of a horse stepping on a man?

G.—Never—as long as he can see. But did they open out for poor Errington?

M.—Oh, this is childish!

G.—I know it is, and worse than that. I don't care. You've ridden Van Loo. Is he the sort of brute to pick his way—'specially when we're coming up in column of troop with any pace on?

M.—Once in a Blue Moon do we gallop in

column of troop, and then only to save time. Aren't three lengths enough for you?

G.—Yes—quite enough. They just allow for the full development of the smash. I'm talking like a cur, I know: but I tell you that, for the past three months, I've felt every hoof of the squadron in the small of my back every time that I've led.

M.—But Gaddy, this is awful!

G.—Isn't it lovely? Isn't it royal? A Captain of the Pink Hussars watering up his charger before parade like the blasted boozing Colonel of a Black Regiment!

M.—You never did!

G.—Once only. He squelched like a mussuck, and the Troop-Sergeant-Major cocked his eye at me. You know old Haffy's eye. I was afraid to do it again.

M.—I should think so. That was the best way to rupture old Van Loo's tummy, and make him crumple you up. You knew that.

G.—I didn't care. It took the edge off him.

M.—"Took the edge off him!" Gaddy, you—you—you mustn't, you know! Think of the men.

G.—That's another thing I am afraid of. D'you s'pose they know?

M.—Let's hope not; but they're deadly quick to spot a skrim—little things of that kind. See here, old man, send the Wife Home for the hot weather and come to Kashmir with me. We'll start a boat on the Dal or cross the Rhotang—ibex or idleness—which you please. Only come!

You're a bit off your oats and you're talking nonsense. Look at the Colonel—swag-bellied rascal that he is. He has a wife and no end of bow-window of his own. Can any one of us ride round him—chalkstones and all? I can't, and I think I can shove a crock along a bit.

G.—Some men are different. I haven't the nerve. Lord help me, I haven't the nerve! I've taken up a hole and a half to get my knees well under the wallets. I can't help it. I'm so afraid of anything happening to me. On my soul, I ought to be broke in front of the squadron, for cowardice.

M.—Ugly word, that. I should never have the courage to own up.

G.—I meant to lie about my reasons when I began, but—I've got out of the habit of lying to you, old man. Jack, you won't? . . . But I know you won't.

M.—Of course not. (Half aloud.) The Pinks are paying dearly for their Pride.

G.—Eh? Wha-at?

M.—Don't you know? We've called Mrs. Gadsby the Pride of the Pink Hussars ever since she came to us.

G.—'Tisn't her fault. Don't think that. It's all mine.

M.—What does she say?

G.—I haven't exactly put it before her. She's the best little woman in the world, Jack, and all that . . . but she wouldn't counsel a man to

stick to his calling if it came between him and her. At least, I think—

M.—Never mind. Don't tell her what you told me. Go on the Peerage and Landed-Gentry tack.

G.—She'd see through it. She's five times cleverer than I am.

M.—(Aside.) Then she'll accept the sacrifice and think a little bit worse of him for the rest of her days.

G.—(Absently.) I say, do you despise me?

M.—'Queer way of putting it. Have you ever been asked that question? Think a minute. What answer used you to give?

G.—So bad as that? I'm not entitled to expect anything more; but it's a bit hard when one's best friend turns round and—

M.—So I have found. But you will have consolations—Bailiffs and Drains and Liquid Manure and the Primrose League, and, perhaps, if you're lucky, the Colonelcy of a Yeomanry Cav-al-ry Regiment—all uniform and no riding, I believe. How old are you?

G.—Thirty-three. I know it's . . .

M.—At forty you'll be a fool of a J. P. landlord. At fifty you'll own a bath-chair, and The Brigadier, if he takes after you, will be fluttering the dove-cotes of—what's the particular dunghill you're going to? Also, Mrs. Gadsby will be fat.

G.—(Limply.) This is rather more than a joke.

M.—D'you think so? Isn't cutting the Service

a joke? It generally takes a man fifty years to arrive at it. You're quite right, though. It is more than a joke. You've managed it in thirty-three.

G.—Don't make me feel worse than I do. Will it satisfy you if I own that I am a shirker, a skrimshanker, and a coward?

M.—It will not, because I'm the only man in the world who can talk to you like this without being knocked down. You mustn't take all that I've said to heart in this way. I only spoke—a lot of it at least—out of pure selfishness because, because—Oh, damn it all old man,—I don't know what I shall do without you. Of course, you've got the money and the place and all that—and there are two very good reasons why you should take care of yourself.

G.—'Doesn't make it any the sweeter. I'm backing out—I know I am. I always had a soft drop in me somewhere—and I daren't risk any danger to them.

M.—Why in the world should you? You're bound to think of your family—bound to think. Er-hmm. If I wasn't a younger son I'd go too—be shot if I wouldn't!

G.—Thank you, Jack. It's a kind lie, but it's the blackest you've told for some time. I know what I'm doing, and I'm going into it with my eyes open. Old man, I can't help it. What would you do if you were in my place?

M.—(Aside.) 'Couldn't conceive any woman

getting permanently between me and the Regiment. (Aloud.) 'Can't say. 'Very likely I should do no better. I'm sorry for you—awf'ly sorry—but "if them's your sentiments" I believe, I really do, that you are acting wisely.

G.—Do you? I hope you do. (In a whisper.) Jack, be very sure of yourself before you marry. I'm an ungrateful ruffian to say this, but marriage—even as good a marriage as mine has been—hampers a man's work, it cripples his sword-arm, and oh, it plays Hell with his notions of duty! Sometimes—good and sweet as she is—sometimes I could wish that I had kept my freedom. . . . No, I don't mean that exactly.

Mrs. G.—(Coming down veranda.) What are you wagging your head over, Pip?

M.—(Turning quickly.) Me, as usual. The old sermon. Your husband is recommending me to get married. 'Never saw such a one-idead man!

Mrs. G.—Well, why don't you? I dare say you would make some woman very happy.

G.—There's the Law and the Prophets, Jack. Never mind the Regiment. Make a woman happy. (Aside.) O Lord!

M.—We'll see. I must be off to make a Troop Cook desperately unhappy. I won't have the wily Hussar fed on G. B. T. shinbones. . . . (Hastily.) Surely black ants can't be good for The Brigadier. He's picking 'em off the chitai and eating 'em. Here, Señor Comandante Don Grubbynose, come and talk to me. (Lifts G.

junior in his arms.) 'Want my watch? You won't be able to put it into your mouth, but you can try. (G. junior drops watch, breaking dial and hands.)

MRS. G.—Oh, Captain Mafflin, I am so sorry! Jack, you bad, bad little villain. Ahhh!

M.—It's not the least consequence, I assure you. He'd treat the world the same way if he could get it into his hands. Everything's made to be played with and broken, isn't it, young 'un? (Tenderly.) "Oh, Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the mischief that thou hast done."

. . . . .

MRS. G.—Mafflin didn't at all like his watch being broken, though he was too polite to say so. It was entirely his fault for giving it to the child. Dem little puds are werry, werry feeble, aren't dey, my Jack-in-the-box? (To G.) What did he want to see you for?

G.—Regimental shop o' sorts.

MRS. G.—The Regiment! Always the Regiment. On my word, I sometimes feel jealous of Mafflin.

G.—(Wearily.) Poor old Jack! I don't think you need. Isn't it time for The Butcha to have his nap? Bring a chair out here, dear. I've got something to talk over with you.

AND THIS IS THE END OF THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS.

L'ENVOI

WHAT is the moral? Who rides may read.
When the night is thick and the tracks are blind
A friend at a pinch is a friend indeed;
But a fool to wait for the laggard behind.
Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipping the spur from the booted heel,
Tenderest voices cry, "Turn again,"
Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel,
High hopes faint on a warm hearthstone—
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

One may fall but he falls by himself—
Falls by himself with himself to blame;
One may attain and to him is the pelf,
Loot of the city in Gold or Fame:
Plunder of earth shall be all his own
Who travels the fastest and travels alone.

Wherefore the more ye be holpen and stayed—
Stayed by a friend in the hour of toil,
Sing the heretical song I have made—
His be the labor and yours be the spoil.
Win by his aid and the aid disown—
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY

"I have counted forty stars, and am tired."

—Without Benefit of Clergy, p 139.

WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY

I

"But if it be a girl?"

"Lord of my life, it cannot be. I have prayed for so many nights, and sent gifts to Sheikh Badl's shrine so often, that I know God will give us a son—a man-child that shall grow into a man. Think of this and be glad. My mother shall be his mother till I can take him again, and the mullah of the Pattan Mosque shall cast his nativity—God send he be born in an auspicious hour! —and then, and then thou wilt never weary of me, thy slave."

"Since when hast thou been a slave, my queen?"

"Since the beginning—till this mercy came to me. How could I be sure of thy love when I knew that I had been bought with silver?"

"Nay, that was the dowry. I paid it to thy mother."

"And she has buried it, and sits upon it all day long like a hen. What talk is yours of dowry? I was bought as though I had been a Lucknow dancing-girl instead of a child."

"Art thou sorry for the sale?"

"I have sorrowed; but to-day I am glad. Thou wilt never cease to love me now? Answer, my king."

"Never—never. No."

"Not even though the mem-log—the white women of thy own blood—love thee? And remember, I have watched them driving in the evening; they are very fair."

"I have seen fire-balloons by the hundred, I have seen the moon, and—then I saw no more fire-balloons."

Ameera clapped her hands and laughed. "Very good talk," she said. Then, with an assumption of great stateliness: "It is enough. Thou hast my permission to depart—if thou wilt."

The man did not move. He was sitting on a low red-lacquered couch in a room furnished only with a blue-and-white floor-cloth, some rugs, and a very complete collection of native cushions. At his feet sat a woman of sixteen, and she was all but all the world in his eyes. By every rule and law she should have been otherwise, for he was an Englishman and she a Mussulman's daughter, bought two years before from her mother, who, being left without money, would have sold Ameera, shrieking to the Prince of Darkness, if the price had been sufficient.

It was a contract entered into with a light heart. But even before the girl had reached her bloom she came to fill the greater portion of John Holden's life. For her and the withered hag her

mother he had taken a little house overlooking the great red-walled city, and found, when the marigolds had sprung up by the well in the courtyard, and Ameera had established herself according to her own ideas of comfort, and her mother had ceased grumbling at the inadequacy of the cooking-places, the distance from the daily market, and matters of housekeeping in general, that the house was to him his home. Any one could enter his bachelor's bungalow by day or night, and the life that he led there was an unlovely one. In the house in the city his feet only could pass beyond the outer courtyard to the women's rooms; and when the big wooden gate was bolted behind him he was king in his own territory, with Ameera for queen. And there was going to be added to his kingdom a third person, whose arrival Holden felt inclined to resent. It interfered with his perfect happiness. It disarranged the orderly peace of the house that was his own. But Ameera was wild with delight at the thought of it, and her mother not less so. The love of a man, and particularly a white man, was at the best an inconstant affair, but it might, both women argued, be held fast by a baby's hands. "And then," Ameera would always say—"then he will never care for the white mem-log. I hate them all—I hate them all!"

"He will go back to his own people in time," said the mother, "but, by the blessing of God, that time is yet afar off."

Holden sat silent on the couch, thinking of the future, and his thoughts were not pleasant. The drawbacks of a double life are manifold. The government, with singular care, had ordered him out of the station for a fortnight on special duty, in the place of a man who was watching by the bedside of a sick wife. The verbal notification of the transfer had been edged by a cheerful remark that Holden ought to think himself lucky in being a bachelor and a free man. He came to break the news to Ameera.

"It is not good," she said, slowly, "but it is not all bad. There is my mother here, and no harm will come to me—unless, indeed, I die of pure joy. Go thou to thy work, and think no troublesome thoughts. When the days are done, I believe . . . nay, I am sure. And—and then I shall lay him in thy arms, and thou wilt love me forever. The train goes to-night—at midnight, is it not? Go now, and do not let thy heart be heavy by cause of me. But thou wilt not delay in returning! Thou wilt not stay on the road to talk to the bold white mem-log! Come back to me swiftly, my life!"

As he left the courtyard to reach his horse, that was tethered to the gate-post, Holden spoke to the white-haired old watchman who guarded the house, and bid him under certain contingencies despatch the filled-up telegraph form that Holden gave him. It was all that could be done, and, with the sensations of a man who has attended

his own funeral, Holden went away by the night mail to his exile. Every hour of the day he dreaded the arrival of the telegram, and every hour of the night he pictured to himself the death of Ameera. In consequence, his work for the state was not of first-rate quality, nor was his temper toward his colleagues of the most amiable. The fortnight ended without a sign from his home, and, torn to pieces by his anxieties, Holden returned to be swallowed up for two precious hours by a dinner at the club, wherein he heard, as a man hears in a swoon, voices telling him how execrably he had performed the other man's duties, and how he had endeared himself to all his associates. Then he fled on horseback through the night with his heart in his mouth. There was no answer at first to his blows on the gate, and he had just wheeled his horse round to kick it in, when Pir Khan appeared with a lantern and held his stirrup.

"Has aught occurred?" said Holden.

"The news does not come from my mouth, Protector of the Poor, but—" He held out his shaking hand, as befitted the bearer of good news who is entitled to a reward.

Holden hurried through the courtyard. A light burned in the upper room. His horse neighed in the gateway, and he heard a pin-pointed wail that sent all the blood into the apple of his throat. It was a new voice, but it did not prove that Ameera was alive.

"Who is there?" he called up the narrow brick staircase.

There was a cry of delight from Ameera, and then the voice of her mother, tremulous with old age and pride: "We be two women, and—the—man—thy son."

On the threshold of the room Holden stepped on a naked dagger that was laid there to avert ill-luck, and it broke at the hilt under his impatient heel.

"God is great!" cooed Ameera in the half-light. "Thou hast taken his misfortunes on thy head."

"Aye, but how is it with thee, life of my life? Old woman, how is it with her?"

"She has forgotten her sufferings for joy that the child is born. There is no harm; but speak softly," said the mother.

"It only needed thy presence to make me all well," said Ameera. "My king, thou hast been very long away. What gifts hast thou for me? Ah! ah! It is I that bring gifts this time. Look, my life, look! Was there ever such a babe? Nay, I am too weak even to clear my arm from him."

"Rest, then, and do not talk. I am here, bachheri" (little woman).

"Well said, for there is a bond and a heelrope (peecharee) between us now that nothing can break. Look—canst thou see in this light? He is without spot or blemish. Never was such a man-child. Ya Illah! he shall be a pundit—no, a trooper of the queen. And, my life, dost thou

love me as well as ever, though I am faint and sick and worn? Answer truly."

"Yea. I love as I have loved, with all my soul. Lie still, pearl, and rest."

"Then do not go. Sit by my side here—so. Mother, the lord of this house needs a cushion. Bring it." There was an almost imperceptible movement on the part of the new life that lay in the hollow of Ameera's arm. "Aho!" she said, her voice breaking with love. "The babe is a champion from his birth. He is kicking me in the side with mighty kicks. Was there ever such a babe? And he is ours to us—thine and mine. Put thy hand on his head, but carefully, for he is very young, and men are unskilled in such matters."

Very cautiously Holden touched with the tips of his fingers the downy head.

"He is of the Faith," said Ameera; "for, lying here in the night-watches, I whispered the Call to Prayer and the Profession of Faith into his ears. And it is most marvelous that he was born upon a Friday, as I was born. Be careful of him, my life; but he can almost grip with his hands."

Holden found one helpless little hand that closed feebly on his finger. And the clutch ran through his limbs till it settled about his heart. Till then his sole thought had been for Ameera. He began to realize that there was some one else in the world, but he could not feel that it was a veritable

son with a soul. He sat down to think, and Ameera dozed lightly.

"Get hence, sahib," said her mother, under her breath. "It is not good that she should find you here on waking. She must be still."

"I go," said Holden, submissively. "Here be rupees. See that my baba gets fat and finds all that he needs."

The chink of the silver roused Ameera. "I am his mother, and no hireling," she said, weakly. "Shall I look to him more or less for the sake of money? Mother, give it back. I have borne my lord a son."

The deep sleep of weakness came upon her almost before the sentence was completed. Holden went down to the courtyard very softly, with his heart at ease. Pir Khan, the old watchman, was chuckling with delight.

"This house is now complete," he said, and without further comment thrust into Holden's hands the hilt of a saber worn many years ago, when Pir Khan served the queen in the police. The bleat of a tethered goat came from the well-curb.

"There be two," said Pir Khan—"two goats of the best. I bought them, and they cost much money; and since there is no birth-party assembled, their flesh will be all mine. Strike carefully, sahib. 'Tis an ill-balanced saber at the best. Wait till they raise their heads from cropping the marigolds."

"And why?" said Holden, bewildered.

"For the birth sacrifice. What else? Otherwise the child, being unguarded from fate, may die. The Protector of the Poor knows the fitting words to be said."

Holden had learned them once, with little thought that he would ever say them in earnest. The touch of the cold saber-hilt in his palm turned suddenly to the clinging grip of the child up-stairs —the child that was his own son—and a dread of loss filled him.

"Strike!" said Pir Khan. "Never life came into the world but life was paid for it. See, the goats have raised their heads. Now! With a drawing cut!"

Hardly knowing what he did, Holden cut twice as he muttered the Mohammedan prayer that runs: "Almighty! In place of this my son I offer life for life, blood for blood, head for head, bone for bone, hair for hair, skin for skin." The waiting horse snorted and bounded in his pickets at the smell of the raw blood that spurted over Holden's riding-boots.

"Well smitten!" said Pir Khan, wiping the saber. "A swordsman was lost in thee. Go with a light heart, heaven born. I am thy servant and the servant of thy son. May the Presence live a thousand years, and . . . the flesh of the goats is all mine?"

Pir Khan drew back richer by a month's pay. Holden swung himself into the saddle and rode

off through the low-hanging wood smoke of the evening. He was full of riotous exultation, alternating with a vast vague tenderness directed toward no particular object, that made him choke as he bent over the neck of his uneasy horse. "I never felt like this in my life," he thought. "I'll go to the club and pull myself together."

A game of pool was beginning, and the room was full of men. Holden entered, eager to get to the light and the company of his fellows, singing at the top of his voice:

"'In Baltimore a-walking, a lady I did meet.'"

"Did you?" said the club secretary from his corner. "Did she happen to tell you that your boots were wringing wet? Great goodness, man, it's blood!"

"Bosh!" said Holden, picking his cue from the rack. "May I cut in? It's dew. I've been riding through high crops. My faith! my boots are in a mess, though!

"'And if it be a girl, she shall wear a wedding-ring;
And if it be a boy, he shall fight for his king;
With his dirk and his cap, and his little jacket blue,
He shall walk the quarter-deck—'"

"Yellow and blue—green next player," said the marker, monotonously.

"'He shall walk the quarter-deck'—am I green, marker?—'he shall walk the quarter-deck'—ouch! that's a bad shot!—'as his daddy used to do!'"

"I don't see that you have anything to crow about," said a zealous junior civilian, acidly. "The government is not exactly pleased with your work when you relieved Sanders."

"Does that mean a wigging from headquarters?" said Holden, with an abstracted smile. "I think I can stand it."

The talk beat up round the ever-fresh subject of each man's work, and steadied Holden till it was time to go to his dark, empty bungalow, where his butler received him as one who knew all his affairs. Holden remained awake for the greater part of the night, and his dreams were pleasant ones.

II

"How old is he now?"

"Ya illah! What a man's question! He is all but six weeks old; and on this night I go up to the housetop with thee, my life, to count the stars. For that is auspicious. And he was born on a Friday, under the sign of the Sun, and it has been told to me that he will outlive us both and get wealth. Can we wish for aught better, beloved?"

"There is nothing better. Let us go up to the roof, and thou shalt count the stars—but a few only, for the sky is heavy with cloud."

"The winter rains are late, and maybe they come out of season. Come, before all the stars are hid. I have put on my richest jewels."

"Thou hast forgotten the best of all."

"Ai! Ours. He comes also. He has never yet seen the skies."

Ameera climbed the narrow staircase that let to the flat roof. The child, placid and unwinking, lay in the hollow of her right arm, gorgeous in silver-fringed muslin, with a small skull-cap on his head. Ameera wore all that she valued most. The diamond nose-stud that takes the place of the Western patch in drawing attention to the curve of the nostril, the gold ornament in the center of the forehead studded with tallow-drop emeralds and flawed rubies, the heavy circlet of beaten gold that was fastened round her neck by the softness of the pure metal, and the chinking curb-patterned silver anklets hanging low over the rosy ankle-bone. She was dressed in jade-green muslin, as befitted a daughter of the Faith, and from shoulder to elbow and elbow to wrist ran bracelets of silver tied with floss silk, frail glass bangles slipped over the wrist in proof of the slenderness of the hand, and certain heavy gold bracelets that had no part in her country's ornaments, but since they were Holden's gift, and fastened with a cunning European snap, delighted her immensely.

They sat down by the low white parapet of the roof, overlooking the city and its lights.

"They are happy down there," said Ameera. "But I do not think that they are as happy as we. Nor do I think the white mem-log are as happy. And thou?"

"I know they are not."

"How dost thou know?"

"They give their children over to the nurses."

"I have never seen that," said Ameera, with a sigh; "nor do I wish to see. Ahi!"—she dropped her head on Holden's shoulder—"I have counted forty stars, and I am tired. Look at the child, love of my life. He is counting, too."

The baby was staring with round eyes at the dark of the heavens. Ameera placed him in Holden's arms, and he lay there without a cry.

"What shall we call him among ourselves?" she said. "Look! Art thou ever tired of looking? He carries thy very eyes! But the mouth—"

"Is thine, most dear. Who should know better than I?"

" 'Tis such a feeble mouth. Oh, so small! And yet it holds my heart between its lips. Give him to me now. He has been too long away."

"Nay, let him lie; he has not yet begun to cry."

"When he cries thou wilt give him back, eh? What a man of mankind thou art! If he cried, he were only the dearer to me. But, my life, what little name shall we give him?"

The small body lay close to Holden's heart. It was utterly helpless and very soft. He scarcely dared to breathe for fear of crushing it. The caged green parrot, that is regarded as a sort of guardian spirit in most native households, moved on its perch and fluttered a drowsy wing.

"There is the answer," said Holden. "Mian

Mittu has spoken. He shall be the parrot. When he is ready he will talk mightily, and run about. Mian Mittu is the parrot in thy—in the Mussulman tongue, is it not?"

"Why put me so far off?" said Ameera, fretfully. "Let it be like unto some English name—but not wholly. For he is mine."

"Then call him Tota, for that is likest English."

"Aye, Tota; and that is still the parrot. Forgive me, my lord, for a minute ago; but, in truth, he is too little to wear all the weight of Mian Mittu for name. He shall be Tota—our Tota to us. Hearest thou, oh, small one? Littlest, thou art Tota."

She touched the child's cheek, and, he waking, wailed, and it was necessary to return him to his mother, who soothed him with the wonderful rhyme of "Aré koko, Ja ré koko!" which says:

"Oh, crow! Go crow! Baby's sleeping sound,
And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a penny a pound—
Only a penny a pound, *Baba*—only a penny a pound."

Reassured many times as to the price of those plums, Tota cuddled himself down to sleep. The two sleek white well-bullocks in the courtyard were steadily chewing the cud of their evening meal; old Pir Khan squatted at the head of Holden's horse, his police saber across his knees, pulling drowsily at a big water-pipe that croaked like a bull-frog in a pond. Ameera's mother

sat spinning in the lower veranda, and the wooden gate was shut and barred. The music of a marriage procession came to the roof above the gentle hum of the city, and a string of flying foxes crossed the face of the low moon.

"I have prayed," said Ameera, after a long pause, with her chin in her hand—"I have prayed for two things. First, that I may die in thy stead, if thy death is demanded; and in the second, that I may die in the place of the child. I have prayed to the Prophet and to Beebee Miriam.* Thinkest thou either will hear?"

"From thy lips who would not hear the lightest word?"

"I asked for straight talk, and thou hast given me sweet talk. Will my prayers be heard?"

"How can I say? God is very good."

"Of that I am not sure. Listen now. When I die or the child dies, what is thy fate? Living, thou wilt return to the bold white mem-log, for kind calls to kind."

"Not always."

"With a woman, no. With a man it is otherwise. Thou wilt in this life, later on, go back to thine own folk. That I could almost endure, for I should be dead. But in thy very death thou wilt be taken away to a strange place and a paradise that I do not know."

*The Virgin Mary.

"Will it be paradise?"

"Surely; for what God would harm thee? But we two—I and the child—shall be elsewhere, and we cannot come to thee, nor canst thou come to us. In the old days, before the child was born, I did not think of these things; but now I think of them perpetually. It is very hard talk."

"It will fall as it will fall. To-morrow we do not know, but to-day and love we know well. Surely we are happy now."

"So happy that it were well to make our happiness assured. And thy Beebee Miriam should listen to me; for she is also a woman. But then she would envy me— It is not seemly for men to worship a woman."

Holden laughed aloud at Ameera's little spasm of jealousy.

"Is it not seemly? Why didst thou not turn me from worship of thee, then?"

"Thou a worshiper! And of me! My king, for all thy sweet words, well I know that I am thy servant and thy slave, and the dust under thy feet. And I would not have it otherwise. See!"

Before Holden could prevent her she stooped forward and touched his feet; recovering herself with a little laugh, she hugged Tota closer to her bosom. Then, almost savagely:

"Is it true that the bold white mem-log live for three times the length of my life? Is it true that they make their marriages not before they are old women?"

"They marry as do others—when they are women."

"That I know, but they wed when they are twenty-five. Is that true?"

"That is true."

"Ya illah! At twenty-five. Who would of his own will take a wife even of eighteen? She is a woman—aging every hour. Twenty-five! I shall be an old woman at that age, and— Those memlog remain young forever. How I hate them!"

"What have they to do with us?"

"I cannot tell. I know only that there may now be alive on this earth a woman ten years older than I who may come to thee and take thy love ten years after I am an old woman, gray-headed, and the nurse of Tota's son. That is unjust and evil. They should die too."

"Now, for all thy years thou art a child, and shalt be picked up and carried down the staircase."

"Tota! Have a care for Tota, my lord! Thou, at least, art as foolish as any babe!" Ameera tucked Tota out of harm's way in the hollow in her neck, and was carried down-stairs, laughing, in Holden's arms, while Tota opened his eyes and smiled, after the manner of the lesser angels.

He was a silent infant, and almost before Holden could realize that he was in the world, developed into a small gold-colored godling and unquestioned despot of the house overlooking the city. Those were months of absolute happiness

to Holden and Ameera—happiness withdrawn from the world, shut in behind the wooden gate that Pir Khan guarded. By day Holden did his work, with an immense pity for such as were not so fortunate as himself, and a sympathy for small children that amazed and amused many mothers at the little station gatherings. At nightfall he returned to Ameera—Ameera full of the wondrous doings of Tota: how he had been seen to clap his hands together and move his fingers with intention and purpose, which was manifestly a miracle; how later he had of his own initiative crawled out of his low bedstead on to the floor, and swayed on both feet for the space of three breaths. "And they were long breaths, for my heart stood still with delight," said Ameera.

Then he took the beasts into his councils—the well-bullocks, the little gray squirrels, the mongoose that lived in a hole near the well, and especially Mian Mittu, the parrot, whose tail he grievously pulled, and Mian Mittu screamed till Ameera and Holden arrived.

"Oh, villain! Child of strength! This to thy brother on the house-top! Tobah, tobah! Fy! fy! But I know a charm to make him wise as Suleiman and Aflatoun.* Now look," said Ameera. She drew from an embroidered bag a handful of almonds. "See! we count seven. In the name of God!" She placed Mian Mittu, very angry and

*Solomon and Plato.

rumpled, on the top of his cage, and, seating herself between the babe and the bird, cracked and peeled an almond less white than her teeth. "This is a true charm, my life; and do not laugh. See! I give the parrot one half and Tota the other." Mian Mittu, with careful beak, took his share from between Ameera's lips, and she kissed the other half into the mouth of the child, who eat it slowly, with wondering eyes. "This I will do each day of seven, and without doubt he who is ours will be a bold speaker and wise. Eh, Tota, what wilt thou be when thou art a man and I am gray-headed?" Tota tucked his fat legs into adorable creases. He could crawl, but he was not going to waste the spring of his youth in idle speech. He wanted Mian Mittu's tail to tweak.

When he was advanced to the dignity of a silver belt—which, with a magic square engraved on silver and hung round his neck, made up the greater part of his clothing—he staggered on a perilous journey down the garden to Pir Khan, and proffered him all his jewels in exchange for one little ride on Holden's horse. He had seen his mother's mother chaffering with pedlers in the veranda. Pir Khan wept, set the untried feet on his own gray head in sign of fealty, and brought the bold adventurer to his mother's arms, vowing that Tota would be a leader of men ere his beard was grown.

One hot evening, while he sat on the roof between his father and mother, watching the never-ending warfare of the kites that the city boys flew, he demanded a kite of his own, with Pir Khan to fly it, because he had a fear of dealing with anything larger than himself; and when Holden called him a "spark," he rose to his feet and answered slowly, in defense of his new-found individuality: "Hum 'park nahin hai. Hum admi hai." (I am no spark, but a man.)

The protest made Holden choke, and devote himself very seriously to a consideration of Tota's future.

He need hardly have taken the trouble. The delight of that life was too perfect to endure. Therefore it was taken away, as many things are taken away in India, suddenly and without warning. The little lord of the house, as Pir Khan called him, grew sorrowful and complained of pains, who had never known the meaning of pain. Ameera, wild with terror, watched him through the night, and in the dawning of the second day the life was shaken out of him by fever—the seasonal autumn fever. It seemed altogether impossible that he could die, and neither Ameera nor Holden at first believed the evidence of the body on the bedstead. Then Ameera beat her head against the wall, and would have flung herself down the well in the garden had Holden not restrained her by main force.

One mercy only was granted to Holden. He

rode to his office in broad daylight, and found waiting him an unusually heavy mail that demanded concentrated attention and hard work. He was not, however, alive to this kindness of the gods.

III

The first shock of a bullet is no more than a brisk pinch. The wrecked body does not send in its protest to the soul till ten or fifteen seconds later. Then comes thirst, throbbing and agony, and a ridiculous amount of screaming. Holden realized his pain slowly, exactly as he had realized his happiness, and with the same imperious necessity for hiding all trace of it. In the beginning he only felt that there had been a loss, and that Ameera needed comforting where she sat with her head on her knees, shivering as Mian Mittu, from the house-top, called "Tota! Tota! Tota!" Later all his world and the daily life of it rose up to hurt him. It was an outrage that any one of the children at the band-stand in the evening should be alive and clamorous when his own child lay dead. It was more than mere pain when one of them touched him, and stories told by overfond fathers of their children's latest performances cut him to the quick. He could not declare his pain. He had neither help, comfort, nor sympathy, and Ameera, at the end of each weary day, would lead him through the hell of self-questioning reproach

which is reserved for those who have lost a child, and believe that with a little—just a little—more care it might have been saved. There are not many hells worse than this, but he knows one who has sat down temporarily to consider whether he is or is not responsible for the death of his wife.

"Perhaps," Ameera would say, "I did not take sufficient heed. Did I, or did I not? The sun on the roof that day when he played so long alone, and I was—ahi! braiding my hair—it may be that the sun then bred the fever. If I had warned him from the sun he might have lived. But, oh, my life, say that I am guiltless! Thou knowest that I loved him as I loved thee! Say that there is no blame on me, or I shall die—I shall die!"

"There is no blame. Before God, none. It was written, and how could we do aught to save? What has been, has been. Let it go, beloved."

"He was all my heart to me. How can I let the thought go when my arm tells me every night that he is not here. Ahi! ahi! Oh, Tota, come back to me—come back again, and let us be all together as it was before!"

"Peace! peace! For thine own sake, and for mine also, if thou lovest me, rest."

"By this I know thou dost not care; and how shouldst thou? The white men have hearts of stone and souls of iron. Oh, that I had married a man of mine own people—though he beat me—and had never eaten the bread of an alien!"

"Am I an alien, mother of my son?"

"What else, sahib? . . . Oh, forgive me—forgive! The death has driven me mad. Thou art the life of my heart, and the light of my eyes, and the breath of my life, and—and I have put thee from me, though it was but for a moment. If thou goest away, to whom shall I look for help? Do not be angry. Indeed, it was the pain that spoke, and not thy slave."

"I know—I know. We be two who were three. The greater need, therefore, that we should be one."

They were sitting on the roof, as of custom. The night was a warm one in early spring, and sheet-lightning was dancing on the horizon to a broken tune played by far-off thunder. Ameera settled herself in Holden's arms.

"The dry earth is lowing like a cow for the rain, and I—I am afraid. It was not like this when we counted the stars. But thou lovest me as much as before, though a bond is taken away? Answer."

"I love more, because a new bond has come out of the sorrow that we have eaten together; and that thou knowest."

"Yea, I know," said Ameera, in a very small whisper. "But it is good to hear thee say so, my life, who art so strong to help. I will be a child no more, but a woman, and an aid to thee. Listen. Give me my sitar, and I will sing bravely."

She took the light silver-studded sitar, and began a song of the great hero Rajá Rasalu. The hand failed on the strings, the tune halted,

checked, and at a low note turned off to the poor little nursery rhyme about the wicked crow:

> "'And the wild plums grow in the jungle—
> Only a penny a pound,
> Only a penny a pound, *Baba*—only—'"

Then came the tears and the piteous rebellion against fate, till she slept, moaning a little in her sleep, with the right arm thrown clear of the body, as though it protected something that was not there.

It was after this night that life became a little easier for Holden. The ever-present pain of loss drove him into his work, and the work repaid him by filling up his mind for eight or nine hours a day. Ameera sat alone in the house and brooded, but grew happier when she understood that Holden was more at ease, according to the custom of women. They touched happiness again, but this time with caution.

"It was because we loved Tota that he died. The jealousy of God was upon us," said Ameera. "I have hung up a large black jar before our window to turn the Evil Eye from us, and we must make no protestations of delight, but go softly underneath the stars, lest God find us out. Is that not good talk, worthless one?"

She had shifted the accent of the word that means "beloved," in proof of the sincerity of her purpose. But the kiss that followed the new christening was a thing that any deity might have en-

vied. They went about henceforth saying: "It is naught—it is naught," and hoping that all the powers heard.

The powers were busy on other things. They had allowed thirty million people four years of plenty, wherein men fed well and the crops were certain and the birth-rate rose year by year; the districts reported a purely agricultural population varying from nine hundred to two thousand to the square mile of the overburdened earth. It was time to make room. And the Member of the Lower Tooting, wandering about India in top-hat and frock-coat, talked largely of the benefits of British rule, and suggested as the one thing needful the establishment of duly qualified electoral system and a general bestowal of the franchise. His long-suffering hosts smiled and made him welcome, and when he paused to admire, with pretty picked words, the blossom of the blood-red dhak-tree, that had flowered untimely for a sign of the sickness that was coming, they smiled more than ever.

It was the Deputy Commissioner of Kot-Kumharsen, staying at the club for a day, who lightly told a tale that made Holden's blood run cold as he overheard the end.

"He won't bother any one any more. Never saw a man so astonished in my life. By Jove! I thought he meant to ask a question in the House about it. Fellow-passenger in his ship—dined next him—bowled over by cholera, and died in

eighteen hours. You needn't laugh, you fellows. The Member for Lower Tooting is awfully angry about it; but he's more scared. I think he's going to take his enlightened self out of India."

"I'd give a good deal if he were knocked over. It might keep a few vestrymen of his kidney to their parish. But what's this about cholera? It's full early for anything of that kind," said a warden of an unprofitable salt-lick.

"Dunno," said the deputy commissioner, reflectively. "We've got locusts with us. There's sporadic cholera all along the north—at least, we're calling it sporadic for decency's sake. The spring crops are short in five districts, and nobody seems to know where the winter rains are. It's nearly March now. I don't want to scare anybody, but it seems to me that Nature's going to audit her accounts with a big red pencil this summer."

"Just when I wanted to take leave, too," said a voice across the room.

"There won't be much leave this year, but there ought to be a great deal of promotion. I've come in to persuade the government to put my pet canal on the list of famine-relief works. It's an ill wind that blows no good. I shall get that canal finished at last."

"Is it the old program, then," said Holden—"famine, fever, and cholera?"

"Oh, no! Only local scarcity and an unusual prevalence of seasonal sickness. You'll find it all

in the reports if you live till next year. You're a lucky chap. You haven't got a wife to put you out of harm's way. The hill-stations ought to be full of women this year."

"I think you're inclined to exaggerate the talk in the bazars," said a young civilian in the secretariat. "Now, I have observed——"

"I dare say you have," said the deputy commissioner, "but you've a great deal more to observe, my son. In the meantime, I wish to observe to you——" And he drew him aside to discuss the construction of the canal that was so dear to his heart.

Holden went to his bungalow, and began to understand that he was not alone in the world, and also that he was afraid for the sake of another, which is the most soul-satisfying fear known to man.

Two months later, as the deputy had foretold, Nature began to audit her accounts with a red pencil. On the heels of the spring reapings came a cry for bread, and the government, which had decreed that no man should die of want, sent wheat. Then came the cholera from all four quarters of the compass. It struck a pilgrim gathering of half a million at a sacred shrine. Many died at the feet of their god, the others broke and ran over the face of the land, carrying the pestilence with them. It smote a walled city and killed two hundred a day. The people crowded the trains, hanging on to the foot-boards and squat-

ting on the roofs of the carriages; and the cholera followed them, for at each station they dragged out the dead and the dying on the platforms reeking of lime-wash and carbolic acid. They died by the roadside, and the horses of the Englishmen shied at the corpses in the grass. The rains did not come, and the earth turned to iron lest man should escape by hiding in her. The English sent their wives away to the Hills, and went about their work, coming forward as they were bidden to fill the gaps in the fighting line. Holden, sick with fear of losing his chiefest treasure on earth, had done his best to persuade Ameera to go away with her mother to the Himalayas.

"Why should I go?" said she one evening on the roof.

"There is sickness, and the people are dying, and all the white mem-log have gone."

"All of them?"

"All—unless, perhaps, there remain some old scald-head who vexes her husband's heart by running risk of death."

"Nay; who stays is my sister, and thou must not abuse her, for I will be a scald-head too. I am glad all the bold white mem-log are gone."

"Do I speak to a woman or a babe? Go to the Hills, and I will see to it that thou goest like a queen's daughter. Think, child! In a red-lacquered bullock-cart, veiled and curtained, with brass peacocks upon the pole and red-cloth hang-

ings. I will send two orderlies for guard, and——"

"Peace! Thou art the babe in speaking thus. What use are those toys to me? He would have patted the bullocks and played with the housings. For his sake, perhaps—thou hast made me very English—I might have gone. Now I will not. Let the mem-log run."

"Their husbands are sending them, beloved."

"Very good talk. Since when hast thou been my husband to tell me what to do? I have but borne thee a son. Thou art only all the desire of my soul to me. How shall I depart when I know that if evil befall thee by the breadth of so much as my littlest finger-nail—is that not small?—I should be aware of it though I were in Paradise? And here, this summer thou mayest die—ai, janee, die!—and in dying they might call to tend thee a white woman, and she would rob me in the last of thy love."

"But love is not born in a moment, or on a death-bed."

"What dost thou know of love, stone-heart? She would take thy thanks at least, and, by God and the Prophet and Beebee Miriam, the mother of thy Prophet, that I will never endure. My lord and my love, let there be no more foolish talk of going away. Where thou art, I am. It is enough." She put an arm around his neck and a hand on his mouth.

There are not many happinesses so complete as

those that are snatched under the shadow of the sword. They sat together and laughed, calling each other openly by every pet name that could move the wrath of the gods. The city below them was locked up in its own torments. Sulphur-fires blazed in the streets; the conches in the Hindoo temples screamed and bellowed, for the gods were inattentive in those days. There was a service in the great Mohammedan shrine, and the call to prayer from the minarets was almost unceasing. They heard the wailing in the houses of the dead, and once the shriek of a mother who had lost a child and was calling for its return. In the gray dawn they saw the dead borne out through the city gates, each litter with its own little knot of mourners. Wherefore they kissed each other and shivered.

It was a red and heavy audit, for the land was very sick and needed a little breathing-space ere the torrent of cheap life should flood it anew. The children of immature fathers and undeveloped mothers made no resistance. They were cowed and sat still, waiting till the sword should be sheathed in November, if it were so willed. There were gaps among the English, but the gaps were filled. The work of superintending famine relief, cholera-sheds, medicine distribution, and what little sanitation was possible, went forward because it was so ordered.

Holden had been told to hold himself in readiness to move to replace the next man who should

fall. There were twelve hours in each day when he could not see Ameera, and she might die in three. He was considering what his pain would be if he could not see her for three months, or if she died out of his sight. He was absolutely certain that her death would be demanded—so certain that, when he looked up from the telegram and saw Pir Khan breathless in the doorway, he laughed aloud, "And?"—said he.

"When there is a cry in the night and the spirit flutters into the throat, who has a charm that will restore? Come swiftly, heaven born. It is the black cholera."

Holden galloped to his home. The sky was heavy with clouds, for the long-deferred rains were at hand, and the heat was stifling. Ameera's mother met him in the courtyard, whimpering: "She is dying. She is nursing herself into death. She is all but dead. What shall I do, sahib?"

Ameera was lying in the room in which Tota had been born. She made no sign when Holden entered, because the human soul is a very lonely thing, and when it is getting ready to go away hides itself in a misty border-land where the living may not follow. The black cholera does its work quietly and without explanation. Ameera was being thrust out of life as though the Angel of Death had himself put his hand upon her. The quick breathing seemed to show that she was either afraid or in pain, but neither eyes nor mouth gave any answer to Holden's kisses. There

was nothing to be said or done. Holden could only wait and suffer. The first drops of the rain began to fall on the roof, and he could hear shouts of joy in the parched city.

The soul came back a little and the lips moved. Holden bent down to listen. "Keep nothing of mine," said Ameera. "Take no hair from my head. She would make thee burn it later on. That flame I should feel. Lower! Stoop lower! Remember only that I was thine and bore thee a son. Though thou wed a white woman to-morrow, the pleasure of taking in thy arms thy first son is taken from thee forever. Remember me when thy son is born—the one that shall carry thy name before all men. His misfortunes be on my head. I bear witness—I bear witness"—the lips were forming the words on his ear—"that there is no God but—thee, beloved."

Then she died. Holden sat still, and thought of any kind was taken from him till he heard Ameera's mother lift the curtain.

"Is she dead, sahib?"

"She is dead."

"Then I will mourn, and afterward take an inventory of the furniture in this house; for that will be mine. The sahib does not mean to resume it. It is so little, so very little, sahib, and I am an old woman. I would like to lie softly."

"For the mercy of God, be silent awhile! Go out and mourn where I cannot hear."

"Sahib, she will be buried in four hours."

"I know the custom. I shall go ere she is taken away. That matter is in thy hands. Look to it that the bed—on which—on which—she lies——"

"Aha! That beautiful red-lacquered bed. I have long desired——"

—"That the bed is left here untouched for my disposal. All else in the house is thine. Hire a cart, take everything, go hence, and before sunrise let there be nothing in this house but that which I have ordered thee to respect."

"I am an old woman. I would stay at least for the days of mourning, and the rains have just broken. Whither shall I go.

"What is that to me? My order is that there is a going. The house-gear is worth a thousand rupees, and my orderly shall bring thee a hundred rupees to-night."

"That is very little. Think of the cart-hire."

"It shall be nothing unless thou goest, and with speed. Oh, woman, get hence, and leave me to my dead!"

The mother shuffled down the staircase, and in her anxiety to take stock of the house-fittings forgot to mourn. Holden stayed by Ameera's side, and the rain roared on the roof. He could not think connectedly by reason of the noise, though he made many attempts to do so. Then four sheeted ghosts glided dripping into the room and stared at him through their veils. They were the washers of the dead. Holden left the room and went out to his horse. He had come in a

dead, stifling calm, through ankle-deep dust. He found the courtyard a rain-lashed pond alive with frogs, a torrent of yellow water ran under the gate, and a roaring wind drove the bolts of the rain like buckshot against the mud walls. Pir Khan was shivering in his little hut by the gate, and the horse was stamping uneasily in the water.

"I have been told the sahib's order," said he. "It is well. This house is now desolate. I go also, for my monkey face would be a reminder of that which has been. Concerning the bed, I will bring that to thy house yonder in the morning. But remember, sahib, it will be to thee as a knife turned in a green wound. I go upon a pilgrimage and I will take no money. I have grown fat in the protection of the Presence, whose sorrow is my sorrow. For the last time I hold his stirrup."

He touched Holden's foot with both hands, and the horse sprung out into the road, where the creaking bamboos were whipping the sky and all the frogs were chuckling. Holden could not see for the rain in his face. He put his hands before his eyes and muttered: "Oh, you brute! You utter brute!"

The news of his trouble was already in his bungalow. He read the knowledge in his butler's eyes when Ahmed Khan brought in food, and for the first and last time in his life laid a hand upon his master's shoulder, saying: "Eat, sahib, eat. Meat is good against sorrow. I also have known. Moreover, the shadows come and go,

sahib. The shadows come and go. These be curried eggs."

Holden could neither eat nor sleep. The heavens sent down eight inches of rain in that night and scoured the earth clean. The waters tore down walls, broke roads, and washed open the shallow graves in the Mohammedan burying-ground. All next day it rained, and Holden sat still in his house considering his sorrow. On the morning of the third day he received a telegram which said only: "Ricketts, Myndonie. Dying. Holden. Relieve. Immediate." Then he thought that before he departed he would look at the house wherein he had been master and lord. There was a break in the weather. The rank earth steamed with vapor, and Holden was vermilion from head to heel with the prickly-heat born of sultry moisture.

He found that the rains had torn down the mud-pillars of the gateway, and the heavy wooden gate that had guarded his life hung drunkenly from one hinge. There was grass three inches high in the courtyard; Pir Khan's lodge was empty, and the sodden thatch sagged between the beams. A gray squirrel was in possession of the veranda, as if the house had been untenanted for thirty years instead of three days. Ameera's mother had removed everything except some mildewed matting. The tick-tick of the little scorpions as they hurried across the floor was the only sound in the house. Ameera's room and

that other one where Tota had lived were heavy with mildew, and the narrow staircase leading to the roof was streaked and stained with rain-borne mud. Holden saw all these things, and came out again to meet in the road Durga Dass, his landlord—portly, affable, clothed in white muslin, and driving a C-spring buggy. He was overlooking his property, to see how the roofs withstood the stress of the first rains.

"I have heard," said he, "you will not take this place any more, sahib?"

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Perhaps I shall let it again."

"Then I will keep it on while I am away."

Durga Dass was silent for some time. "You shall not take it on, sahib," he said. "When I was a young man I also— But to-day I am a member of the municipality. Ho! ho! No. When the birds have gone, what need to keep the nest? I will have it pulled down; the timber will sell for something always. It shall be pulled down, and the municipality shall make a road across, as they desire, from the burning-ghat to the city wall. So that no man may say where this house stood."

CITY OF THE DREADFUL NIGHT

CITY OF THE DREADFUL NIGHT

CHAPTER I

A REAL LIVE CITY

We are all backwoodsmen and barbarians together—we others dwelling beyond the Ditch, in the outer darkness of the Mofussil. There are no such things as commissioners and heads of departments in the world, and there is only one city in India. Bombay is too green, too pretty and too stragglesome; and Madras died ever so long ago. Let us take off our hats to Calcutta, the many-sided, the smoky, the magnificent, as we drive in over the Hugli Bridge in the dawn of a still February morning. We have left India behind us at Howrah Station, and now we enter foreign parts. No, not wholly foreign. Say rather too familiar.

All men of certain age know the feeling of caged irritation—an illustration in the Graphic, a bar of music of the light words of a friend from home may set it ablaze—that comes from the knowledge of our lost heritage of London. At home they, the other men, our equals, have at their disposal all that town can supply—the roar of the streets, the lights, the music, the pleasant

faces, the millions of their own kind, and a wilderness of pretty, fresh-colored English-women, theaters and restaurants. It is their right. They accept it as such, and even affect to look upon it with contempt. And we, we have nothing except the few amusements that we painfully build up for ourselves—the dolorous dissipations of gymkhanas where every one knows everybody else, or the chastened intoxication of dances where all engagements are booked, in ink, ten days ahead, and where everybody's antecedents are as patent as his or her method of waltzing. We have been deprived of our inheritance. The men at home are enjoying it all, not knowing how fair and rich it is, and we at the most can only fly westward for a few months and gorge what, properly speaking, should take seven or eight or ten luxurious years. That is the lost heritage of London; and the knowledge of the forfeiture, wilful or forced, comes to most men at times and seasons, and they get cross.

Calcutta holds out false hopes of some return. The dense smoke hangs low, in the chill of the morning, over an ocean of roofs, and, as the city wakes, there goes up to the smoke a deep, full-throated boom of life and motion and humanity. For this reason does he who sees Calcutta for the first time hang joyously out of the ticca-gharri and sniff the smoke, and turn his face toward the tumult, saying: "This is, at last, some portion of my heritage returned to me. This is

a city. There is life here, and there should be all manner of pleasant things for the having, across the river and under the smoke." When Leland, he who wrote the Hans Breitmann Ballads, once desired to know the name of an austere, plug-hatted red-skin of repute, his answer, from the lips of a half-breed, was:

"He Injun. He big Injun. He heap big Injun. He dam big heap Injun. He dam mighty great big heap Injun. He Jones!" The litany is an expressive one, and exactly describes the first emotions of a wandering savage adrift in Calcutta. The eye has lost its sense of proportion, the focus has contracted through overmuch residence in up-country stations—twenty minutes' canter from hospital to parade-ground, you know—and the mind has shrunk with the eye. Both say together, as they take in the sweep of shipping above and below the Hugli Bridge: "Why, this is London! This is the docks. This is Imperial. This is worth coming across India to see!"

Then a distinctly wicked idea takes possession of the mind: "What a divine—what a heavenly place to loot!" This gives place to a much worse devil—that of Conservatism. It seems not only a wrong but a criminal thing to allow natives to have any voice in the control of such a city—adorned, docked, wharfed, fronted and reclaimed by Englishmen, existing only because England lives, and dependent for its life on England. All India knows of the Calcutta Municipality; but

has any one thoroughly investigated the Big Calcutta Stink! There is only one. Benares is fouler in point of concentrated, pent-up muck, and there are local stenches in Peshawur which are stronger than the B. C. S.; but, for diffused, soul-sickening expansiveness, the reek of Calcutta beats both Benares and Peshawur. Bombay cloaks her stenches with a veneer of assafœtida and huqa-tobacco; Calcutta is above pretense. There is no tracing back the Calcutta plague to any one source. It is faint, it is sickly, and it is indescribable; but Americans at the Great Eastern Hotel say that is something like the smell of the Chinese quarter in San Francisco. It is certainly not an Indian smell. It resembles the essence of corruption that has rotted for the second time—the clammy odor of blue slime. And there is no escape from it. It blows across the maidan; it comes in gusts into the corridors of the Great Eastern Hotel; what they are pleased to call the "Palaces of Chouringhi" carry it; it swirls round the Bengal Club; it pours out of by-streets with sickening intensity, and the breeze of the morning is laden with it. It is first found, in spite of the fume of the engines, in Howrah Station. It seems to be worst in the little lanes at the back of the Lal Bazar where the drinking-shops are, but it is nearly as bad opposite Government House and in the Public Offices. The thing is intermittent. Six moderately pure mouthfuls of air may be drawn without offense. Then comes the seventh

wave and the queasiness of an uncultured stomach. If you live long enough in Calcutta you grow used to it. The regular residents admit the disgrace, but their answer is: "Wait till the wind blows off the Salt Lakes where all the sewage goes, and then you'll smell something." That is their defense! Small wonder that they consider Calcutta is a fit place for a permanent Viceroy. Englishmen who can calmly extenuate one shame by another are capable of asking for anything—and expecting to get it.

If an up-country station holding three thousand troops and twenty civilians owned such a possession as Calcutta does, the Deputy Commissioner or the Cantonment Magistrate would have all the natives off the board of management or decently shoveled into the background until the mess was abated. Then they might come on again and talk of "high-handed oppression" as much as they liked. That stink, to an unprejudiced nose, damns Calcutta as a City of Kings. And, in spite of that stink, they allow, they even encourage, natives to look after the place! The damp, drainage-soaked soil is sick with teeming life of a hundred years, and the Municipal Board list is choked with the names of natives—men of the breed born in and raised off this surfeited muck-heap! They own property, these amiable Aryans on the Municipal and the Bengal Legislative Council. Launch a proposal to tax them on that property, and they naturally howl. They also howl up-country, but

there the halls for mass-meetings are few, and the vernacular papers fewer, and with a zubbar dusti Secretary and a President whose favor is worth the having and whose wrath is undesirable, men are kept clean despite themselves, and may not poison their neighbors. Why, asks a savage, let them vote at all? They can put up with this filthiness. They cannot have any feelings worth caring a rush for. Let them live quietly and hide away their money under our protection, while we tax them till they know through their purses the measure of their neglect in the past, and when a little of the smell has been abolished, bring them back again to talk and take the credit of enlightenment. The better classes own their broughams and barouches; the worse can shoulder an Englishman into the kennel and talk to him as though he were a khitmatgar. They can refer to an English lady as an aurat; they are permitted a freedom—not to put it too coarsely—of speech which, if used by an Englishman toward an Englishman, would end in serious trouble. They are fenced and protected and made inviolate. Surely they might be content with all those things without entering into matters which they cannot, by the nature of their birth, understand.

Now, whether all this genial diatribe be the outcome of an unbiased mind or the result first of sickness caused by that ferocious stench, and secondly of headache due to day-long smoking to drown the stench, is an open question. Any-

way, Calcutta is a fearsome place for a man not educated up to it.

A word of advice to other barbarians. Do not bring a north-country servant into Calcutta. He is sure to get into trouble, because he does not understand the customs of the city. A Punjabi in this place for the first time esteems it his bounden duty to go to the Ajaib-ghar—the Museum. Such an one has gone and is even now returned very angry and troubled in the spirit. "I went to the Museum," says he, "and no one gave me any gali. I went to the market to buy my food, and then I sat upon a seat. There came a chaprissi who said: 'Go away, I want to sit here.' I said: 'I am here first.' He said: 'I am chaprissi! nikal jao!' and hit he me. Now that sitting-place was open to all, so I hit him till he wept. He ran away for the Police, and I went away too, for the Police here are all Sahibs. Can I have leave from two o'clock to go and look for that chaprissi and hit him again?"

Behold the situation! An unknown city full of smell that makes one long for rest and retirement, and a champing naukar, not yet six hours in the stew, who has started a blood-feud with an unknown chaprissi and clamors to go forth to the fray. General orders that, whatever may be said or done to him, he must not say or do anything in return lead to an eloquent harangue on the quality of izzat and the nature of "face blackening." There is no izzat in Calcutta, and this Awful

Smell blackens the face of any Englishman who sniffs it.

Alas! for the lost delusion of the heritage that was to be restored. Let us sleep, let us sleep, and pray that Calcutta may be better to-morrow.

At present it is remarkably like sleeping with a corpse.

CHAPTER II

THE REFLECTIONS OF A SAVAGE

MORNING brings counsel. Does Calcutta smell so pestiferously after all? Heavy rain has fallen in the night. She is newly-washed, and the clear sunlight shows her at her best. Where, oh where, in all this wilderness of life shall a man go? Newman and Co. publish a three-rupee guide which produces first despair and then fear in the mind of the reader. Let us drop Newman and Co. out of the topmost window of the Great Eastern, trusting to luck and the flight of the hours to evolve wonders and mysteries and amusements.

The Great Eastern hums with life through all its hundred rooms. Doors slam merrily, and all the nations of the earth run up and down the staircases. This alone is refreshing, because the passers bump you and ask you to stand aside. Fancy finding any place outside a Levée-room where Englishmen are crowded together to this extent! Fancy sitting down seventy strong to tâble d'hote and with a deafening clatter of knives and forks! Fancy finding a real bar whence drinks may be obtained! and, joy of joys, fancy stepping out of the hotel into the arms of a live, white, helmeted, buttoned, truncheoned Bobby! A beautiful, burly Bobby—just the sort of man who, seven thousand miles away, staves

off the stuttering witticism of the three-o'clock-in-the-morning reveler by the strong badged arm of authority. What would happen if one spoke to this Bobby? Would he be offended? He is not offended. He is affable. He has to patrol the pavement in front of the Great Eastern and to see that the crowding ticca-gharris do not jam. Toward a presumably respectable white he behaves as a man and a brother. There is no arrogance about him. And this is disappointing. Closer inspection shows that he is not a real Bobby after all. He is a Municipal Police something and his uniform is not correct; at least if they have not changed the dress of the men at home. But no matter. Later on we will inquire into the Calcutta Bobby, because he is a white man, and has to deal with some of the "toughest" folk that ever set out of malice aforethought to paint Job Charnock's city vermilion. You must not, you cannot, cross Old Court House Street without looking carefully to see that you stand no chance of being run over. This is beautiful. There is a steady roar of traffic, cut every two minutes by the deeper roll of the trams. The driving is eccentric, not to say bad, but there is the traffic—more than unsophisticated eyes have beheld for a certain number of years. It means business, it means money-making, it means crowded and hurrying life, and it gets intc the blood and makes it move. Here be big shops with plate-glass fronts —all displaying the well-known names of firms

that we savages only correspond with through the V. P. P. and Parcels Post. They are all here, as large as life, ready to supply anything you need if you only care to sign. Great is the fascination of being able to obtain a thing on the spot without having to write for a week and wait for a month, and then get something quite different. No wonder pretty ladies, who live anywhere within a reasonable distance, come down to do their shopping personally.

"Look here. If you want to be respectable you mustn't smoke in the streets. Nobody does it." This is advice kindly tendered by a friend in a black coat. There is no Levée or Lieutenant-Governor in sight; but he wears the frock-coat because it is daylight, and he can be seen. He also refrains from smoking for the same reason. He admits that Providence built the open air to be smoked in, but he says that "it isn't the thing." This man has a brougham, a remarkably natty little pill-box with a curious wabble about the wheels. He steps into the brougham and puts on —a top hat, a shiny black "plug."

There was a man up-country once who owned a top-hat. He leased it to amateur theatrical companies for some seasons until the nap wore off. Then he threw it into a tree and wild bees hived in it. Men were wont to come and look at the hat, in its palmy days, for the sake of feeling homesick. It interested all the station, and died with two seers of babul flower honey in its bosom. But

top-hats are not intended to be worn in India. They are as sacred as home letters and old rose-buds. The friend cannot see this. He allows that if he stepped out of his brougham and walked about in the sunshine for ten minutes he would get a bad headache. In half an hour he would probably catch sunstroke. He allows all this, but he keeps to his hat and cannot see why a barbarian is moved to inextinguishable laughter at the sight. Every one who owns a brougham and many people who own ticca-gharris keep top-hats and black frock-coats. The effect is curious, and at first fills the beholder with surprise.

And now, "let us see the handsome houses where the wealthy nobles dwell." Northerly lies the great human jungle of the native city, stretching from Burra Bazar to Chitpore. That can keep. Southerly is the maidan and Chouringhi. "If you get out into the center of the maidan you will understand why Calcutta is called the City of Palaces." The traveled American said so at the Great Eastern. There is a short tower, falsely called a "memorial," standing in a waste of soft, sour green. That is as good a place to get to as any other. Near here the newly-landed waler is taught the whole duty of the trap-horse and careers madly in a brake. Near here young Calcutta gets upon a horse and is incontinently run away with. Near here hundreds of kine feed, close to the innumerable trams and the whirl of traffic along the face of Chouringhi Road. The

size of the maidan takes the heart out of any one accustomed to the "gardens" of up-country, just as they say Newmarket Heath cows a horse accustomed to more shut-in course. The huge level is studded with brazen statues of eminent gentlemen riding fretful horses on diabolically severe curbs. The expanse dwarfs the statues, dwarfs everything except the frontage of the far-away Chouringhi Road. It is big—it is impressive. There is no escaping the fact. They built houses in the old days when the rupee was two shillings and a penny. Those houses are three-storied, and ornamented with service-staircases like houses in the Hills. They are also very close together, and they own garden walls of pukka-masonry pierced with a single gate. In their shut-upness they are British. In their spaciousness they are Oriental, but those service-staircases do not look healthy. We will form an amateur sanitary commission and call upon Chouringhi.

A first introduction to the Calcutta durwan is not nice. If he is chewing pan, he does not take the trouble to get rid of his quid. If he is sitting on his charpoy chewing sugar-cane, he does not think it worth his while to rise. He has to be taught those things, and he cannot understand why he should be reproved. Clearly he is a survival of a played-out system. Providence never intended that any native should be made a concierge more insolent than any of the French variety. The people of Calcutta put an Uria in a

little lodge close to the gate of their house, in order that loafers may be turned away, and the houses protected from theft. The natural result is that the durwan treats everybody whom he does not know as a loafer, has an intimate and vendible knowledge of all the outgoings and incomings in that house, and controls, to a large extent, the nomination of the naukar-log. They say that one of the estimable class is now suing a bank for about three lakhs of rupees. Up-country, a Lieutenant-Governor's chaprissi has to work for thirty years before he can retire on seventy thousand rupees of savings. The Calcutta durwan is a great institution. The head and front of his offense is that he will insist upon trying to talk English. How he protects the houses Calcutta only knows. He can be frightened out of his wits by severe speech, and is generally asleep in calling hours. If a rough round of visits be any guide, three times out of seven he is fragrant of drink. So much for the durwan. Now for the houses he guards.

Very pleasant is the sensation of being ushered into a pestiferously stablesome drawing-room. "Does this always happen?" "No, not unless you shut up the room for some time; but if you open the jhilmills there are other smells. You see the stables and the servants' quarters are close too." People pay five hundred a month for half-a-dozen rooms filled with attr of this kind. They make no complaint. When they think the honor of the city

is at stake they say defiantly: "Yes, but you must remember we're a metropolis. We are crowded here. We have no room. We aren't like your little stations." Chouringhi is a stately place full of sumptuous houses, but it is best to look at it hastily. Stop to consider for a moment what the cramped compounds, the black soaked soil, the netted intricacies of the service-staircases, the packed stables, the seethment of human life round the durwans' lodges and the curious arrangement of little open drains means, and you will call it a whited sepulcher.

Men living in expensive tenements suffer from chronic sore-throat, and will tell you cheerily that "we've got typhoid in Calcutta now." Is the pest ever out of it? Everything seems to be built with a view to its comfort. It can lodge comfortably on roofs, climb along from the gutter-pipe to piazza, or rise from sink to veranda and thence to the topmost story. But Calcutta says that all is sound and produces figures to prove it; at the same time admitting that healthy cut flesh will not readily heal. Further evidence may be dispensed with.

Here come pouring down Park Street on the maidan a rush of broughams, neat buggies, the lightest of gigs, trim office brownberrys, shining victorias, and a sprinkling of veritable hansom cabs. In the broughams sit men in top-hats. In the other carts, young men, all very much alike, and all immaculately turned out. A fresh stream

from Chouringhi joins the Park Street detachment, and the two together stream away across the maidan toward the business quarter of the city. This is Calcutta going to office—the civilians of the Government Buildings and the young men to their firms and their blocks and their wharves. Here one sees that Calcutta has the best turn-out in the Empire. Horses and traps alike are enviably perfect, and—mark the touchstone of civilization—the lamps are in the sockets. This is distinctly refreshing. Once more we will take off our hats to Calcutta, the well-appointed, the luxurious. The country-bred is a rare beast here; his place is taken by the waler, and the waler, though a ruffian at heart, can be made to look like a gentleman. It would be indecorous as well as insane to applaud the winking harness, the perfectly lacquered panels, and the liveried saises. They show well in the outwardly fair roads shadowed by the Palaces.

How many sections of the complex society of the place do the carts carry? Imprimis, the Bengal Civilian who goes to Writers' Buildings and sits in a perfect office and speaks flippantly of "sending things into India," meaning thereby the Supreme Government. He is a great person, and his mouth is full of promotion-and-appointment "shop." Generally he is referred to as a "rising man." Calcutta seems full of "rising men." Secondly, the Government of India man, who wears a familiar Simla face, rents a flat when he

is not up in the Hills, and is rational on the subject of the drawbacks of Calcutta. Thirdly, the man of the "firms," the pure non-official who fights under the banner of one of the great houses of the City, or for his own hand in a neat office, or dashes about Clive Street in a brougham doing "share work" or something of the kind. He fears not "Bengal," nor regards he "India." He swears impartially at both when their actions interfere with his operations. His "shop" is quite unintelligible. He is like the English city man with the chill off, lives well and entertains hospitably. In the old days he was greater than he is now, but still he bulks large. He is rational in so far that he will help the abuse of the Municipality, but womanish in his insistence on the excellencies of Calcutta. Over and above these who are hurrying to work are the various brigades, squads and detachments of the other interests. But they are sets and not sections, and revolve round Belvedere, Government House, and Fort William. Simla and Darjeeling claim them in the hot weather. Let them go. They wear top-hats and frock-coats.

It is time to escape from Chouringhi Road and get among the long-shore folk, who have no prejudices against tobacco, and who all use pretty nearly the same sort of hat.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

He set up conclusions to the number of nine thousand seven hundred and sixty four . . . he went afterward to the Sorbonne, where he maintained argument against the theologians for the space of six weeks, from four o'clock in the morning till six in the evening, except for an interval of two hours to refresh themselves and take their repasts, and at this were present the greatest part of the lords of the court, the masters of request, presidents, counselors, those of the accompts, secretaries, advocates, and others; as also the sheriffs of the said town.—*Plantagruel.*

"THE Bengal Legislative Council is sitting now. You will find it in an octagonal wing of Writers' Buildings: straight across the maidan. It's worth seeing." "What are they sitting on?" "Municipal business. No end of a debate." So much for trying to keep low company. The long-shore loafers must stand over. Without doubt this Council is going to hang some one for the state of the City, and Sir Steuart Bayley will be chief executioner. One does not come across Councils every day.

Writers' Buildings are large. You can trouble the busy workers of half-a-dozen departments before you stumble upon the black-stained staircase that leads to an upper chamber looking out over a populous street. Wild chaprissis block the way.

The Councilor Sahibs are sitting, but any one can enter. "To the right of the Lât Sahib's chair, and go quietly." Ill-mannered minion! Does he expect the awe-stricken spectator to prance in with a jubilant war-whoop or turn Catherine-wheels round that sumptuous octagonal room with the blue-domed roof? There are gilt capitals to the half pillars and an Egyptian patterned lotus-stencil makes the walls decorously gay. A thick piled carpet covers all the floor, and must be delightful in the hot weather. On a black wooden throne, comfortably cushioned in green leather, sits Sir Steuart Bayley, Ruler of Bengal. The rest are all great men, or else they would not be there. Not to know them argues oneself unknown. There are a dozen of them, and sit six aside at two slightly curved lines of beautifully polished desks. Thus Sir Steuart Bayley occupies the frog of a badly made horseshoe split at the toe. In front of him, at a table covered with books and pamphlets and papers, toils a secretary. There is a seat for the Reporters, and that is all. The place enjoys a chastened gloom, and its very atmosphere fills one with awe. This is the heart of Bengal, and uncommonly well upholstered. If the work matches the first-class furniture, the ink-pots, the carpets, and the resplendent ceiling, there will be something worth seeing. But where is the criminal who is to be hanged for the stench that runs up and down Writers' Buildings staircases, for the rubbish heaps in the Chitpore Road, for the

sickly savor of Chouringhi, for the dirty little tanks at the back of Belvedere, for the street full of smallpox, for the reeking gharri-stand outside the Great Eastern, for the state of the stone and dirt pavements, for the condition of the gullies of Shampooker, and for a hundred other things?

"This, I submit, is an artificial scheme in supersession of Nature's unit, the individual." The speaker is a slight, spare native in a flat hat-turban, and a black alpaca frock-coat. He looks like a vakil to the boot-heels, and, with his unvarying smile and regulated gesticulation, recalls memories of up-country courts. He never hesitates, is never at a loss for a word, and never in one sentence repeats himself. He talks and talks and talks in a level voice, rising occasionally half an octave when a point has to be driven home. Some of his periods sound very familiar. This, for instance, might be a sentence from the Mirror: "So much for the principle. Let us now examine how far it is supported by precedent." This sounds bad. When a fluent native is discoursing of "principles" and "precedents," the chances are that he will go on for some time. Moreover, where is the criminal, and what is all this talk about abstractions? They want shovels not sentiments, in this part of the world.

A friendly whisper brings enlightenment; "They are plowing through the Calcutta Municipal Bill—plurality of votes you know; here are the papers." And so it is! A mass of motions

and amendments on matters relating to ward votes. Is A to be allowed to give two votes in one ward and one in another? Is section ten to be omitted, and is one man to be allowed one vote and no more? How many votes does three hundred rupees' worth of landed property carry? Is it better to kiss a post or throw it in the fire? Not a word about carbolic acid and gangs of domes. The little man in the black choga revels in his subject. He is great on principles and precedents, and the necessity of "popularizing our system." He fears that under certain circumstances "the status of the candidates will decline." He riots in "self-adjusting majorities," and the healthy influence of the educated middle classes.

For a practical answer to this, there steals across the council chamber just one faint whiff. It is as though some one laughed low and bitterly. But no man heeds. The Englishmen look supremely bored, the native members stare stolidly in front of them. Sir Steuart Bayley's face is as set as the face of the Sphinx. For these things he draws his pay, and his is a low wage for heavy labor. But the speaker, now adrift, is not altogether to be blamed. He is a Bengali, who has got before him just such a subject as his soul loveth—an elaborate piece of academical reform leading no-whither. Here is a quiet room full of pens and papers, and there are men who must listen to him. Apparently there is no time limit to the speeches. Can you wonder that

he talks? He says "I submit" once every ninety seconds, varying the form with "I do submit." The popular element in the electoral body should have prominence. Quite so. He quotes one John Stuart Mill to prove it. There steals over the listener a numbing sense of nightmare. He has heard all this before somewhere—yea; even down to J. S. Mill and the references to the "true interests of the ratepayers." He sees what is coming next. Yes, there is the old Sabha Anjuman journalistic formula—"Western education is an exotic plant of recent importation." How on earth did this man drag Western education into this discussion? Who knows? Perhaps Sir Steuart Bayley does. He seems to be listening. The others are looking at their watches. The spell of the level voice sinks the listener yet deeper into a trance. He is haunted by the ghosts of all the cant of all the political platforms of Great Britain. He hears all the old, old vestry phrases, and once more he smells the smell. That is no dream. Western education is an exotic plant. It is the upas tree, and it is all our fault. We brought it out from England exactly as we brought out the ink bottles and the patterns for the chairs. We planted it and it grew—monstrous as a banian. Now we are choked by the roots of it spreading so thickly in this fat soil of Bengal. The speaker continues. Bit by bit. We builded this dome, visible and invisible, the crown of Writers' Buildings, as we have built and peopled the buildings.

Now we have gone too far to retreat, being "tied and bound with the chain of our own sins." The speech continues. We made that florid sentence. That torrent of verbiage is ours. We taught him what was constitutional and what was unconstitutional in the days when Calcutta smelt. Calcutta smells still, but we must listen to all that he has to say about the plurality of votes and the threshing of wind and the weaving of ropes of sand. It is our own fault absolutely.

The speech ends, and there rises a gray Englishman in a black frock-coat. He looks a strong man, and a worldly. Surely he will say: "Yes, Lala Sahib, all this may be true talk, but there's a burra krab smell in this place, and everything must be safkaroed in a week, or the Deputy Commissioner will not take any notice of you in durbar." He says nothing of the kind. This is a Legislative Council, where they call each other "Honorable So-and-So's." The Englishman in the frock-coat begs all to remember that "we are discussing principles, and no consideration of the details ought to influence the verdict on the principles." Is he then like the rest? How does this strange thing come about? Perhaps these so English office fittings are responsible for the warp. The Council Chamber might be a London Board-room. Perhaps after long years among the pens and papers its occupants grow to think that it really is, and in this belief give résumés of the history of Local Self-Government in England.

The black frock-coat, emphasizing his points with his spectacle-case, is telling his friends how the parish was first the unit of self-government. He then explains how burgesses were elected, and in tones of deep fervor announces: "Commissioners of Sewers are elected in the same way." Whereunto all this lecture? Is he trying to run a motion through under cover of a cloud of words, essaying the well-known "cuttle-fish trick" of the West?

He abandons England for a while, and now we get a glimpse of the cloven hoof in a casual reference to Hindus and Mahomedans. The Hindus will lose nothing by the complete establishment of plurality of votes. They will have the control of their own wards as they used to have. So there is race-feeling, to be explained away, even among these beautiful desks. Scratch the Council, and you come to the old, old trouble. The black frock-coat sits down, and a keen-eyed, black-bearded Englishman rises with one hand in his pocket to explain his views on an alteration of the vote qualification. The idea of an amendment seems to have just struck him. He hints that he will bring it forward later on. He is academical like the others, but not half so good a speaker. All this is dreary beyond words. Why, do they talk and talk about owners and occupiers and burgesses in England and the growth of autonomous institutions when the city, the great city, is here crying out to be cleansed? What has England to

do with Calcutta's evil, and why should Englishmen be forced to wander through mazes of unprofitable argument against men who cannot understand the iniquity of dirt?

A pause follows the black-bearded man's speech. Rises another native, a heavily-built Babu, in a black gown and a strange head-dress. A snowy white strip of cloth is thrown jharun-wise over his shoulders. His voice is high, and not always under control. He begins: "I will try to be as brief as possible." This is ominous. By the way, in Council there seems to be no necessity for a form of address. The orators plunge in medias res, and only when they are well launched throw an occasional "Sir" toward Sir Steuart Bayley, who sits with one leg doubled under him and a dry pen in his hand. This speaker is no good. He talks, but he says nothing, and he only knows where he is drifting to. He says: "We must remember that we are legislating for the Metropolis of India, and therefore we should borrow our institutions from large English towns, and not from parochial institutions." If you think for a minute, that shows a large and healthy knowledge of the history of Local Self-Government. It also reveals the attitude of Calcutta. If the city thought less about itself as a metropolis and more as a midden, its state would be better. The speaker talks patronizingly of "my friend," alluding to the black frock-coat. Then he flounders afresh, and his voice gallops up the

gamut as he declares, "and therefore that makes all the difference." He hints vaguely at threats, something to do with the Hindus and the Mohammedans, but what he means it is difficult to discover. Here, however, is a sentence taken verbatim. It is not likely to appear in this form in the Calcutta papers. The black frock-coat had said that if a wealthy native "had eight votes to his credit, his vanity would prompt him to go to the polling-booth, because he would feel better than half-a-dozen gharri-wans or petty traders." (Fancy allowing a gharri-wan to vote! He has yet to learn how to drive!) Hereon the gentleman with the white cloth: "Then the complaint is that influential voters will not take the trouble to vote. In my humble opinion, if that be so, adopt voting papers. That is the way to meet them. In the same way—The Calcutta Trades' Association—you abolish all plurality of votes: and that is the way to meet them." Lucid, is it not? Up flies the irresponsible voice, and delivers this statement: "In the election for the House of Commons plurality are allowed for persons having interest in different districts." Then hopeless, hopeless fog. It is a great pity that India ever heard of anybody higher than the heads of the Civil Service. The country appeals from the Chota to the Burra Sahib all too readily as it is. Once more a whiff. The gentleman gives a defiant jerk of his shoulder-cloth, and sits down.

Then Sir Steuart Bayley: "The question be-

fore the Council is," etc. There is a ripple of "Ayes" and "Noes," and the "Noes" have it, whatever it may be. The black-bearded gentleman springs his amendment about the voting qualifications. A large senator in a white waistcoat, and with a most genial smile, rises and proceeds to smash up the amendment. Can't see the use of it. Calls it in effect rubbish. The black frock-coat rises to explain his friend's amendment, and incidentally makes a funny little slip. He is a knight, and his friend has been newly knighted. He refers to him as "Mister." The black choga, he who spoke first of all, speaks again, and talks of the "sojourner who comes here for a little time, and then leaves the land." Well it is for the black choga that the sojourner does come, or there would be no comfy places wherein to talk about the power that can be measured by wealth and the intellect "which, sir, I submit, cannot be so measured." The amendment is lost, and trebly and quadruply lost is the listener. In the name of sanity and to preserve the tattered shirt tails of a torn illusion, let us escape. This is the Calcutta Municipal Bill. They have been at it for several Saturdays. Last Saturday Sir Steuart Bayley pointed out that at their present rate they would be about two years in getting it through. Now they will sit till dusk, unless Sir Steuart Bayley, who wants to see Lord Connemara off, puts up the black frock-coat to move an adjournment. It is not good to see a Gov-

ernment close to. This leads to the formation of blatantly self-satisfied judgments, which may be quite as wrong as the cramping system with which we have encompassed ourselves. And in the streets outside Englishmen summarize the situation brutally, thus: "The whole thing is a farce. Time is money to us. We can't stick out those everlasting speeches in the municipality. The natives choke us off, but we know that if things get too bad the Government will step in and interfere, and so we worry along somehow." Meantime Calcutta continues to cry out for the bucket and the broom.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE BANKS OF THE HUGLI

THE clocks of the city have struck two. Where can a man get food? Calcutta is not rich in respect of dainty accommodation. You can stay your stomach at Peliti's or Bonsard's but their shops are not to be found in Hasting Street, or in the places where brokers fly to and fro in office-jauns, sweating and growing visibly rich. There must be some sort of entertainment where sailors congregate. "Honest Bombay Jack" supplies nothing but Burma cheroots and whisky in liquor glasses, but in Lal Bazar, not far from "The Sailors' Coffee-rooms," a board gives bold advertisement that "officers and seamen can find good quarters." In evidence a row of neat officers and seamen are sitting on a bench by the "hotel" door smoking. There is an almost military likeness in their clothes. Perhaps "Honest Bombay Jack" only keeps one kind of felt hat and one brand of suit. When Jack of the mercantile marine is sober, he is very sober. When he is drunk he is—but ask the river police what a lean, mad Yankee can do with his nails and teeth. These gentlemen smoking on the bench are impassive almost as Red Indians. Their attitudes are unrestrained, and they do not wear braces. Nor, it would appear

from the bill of fare, are they particular as to what they eat when they attend tâble d'hôte. The fare is substantial and the regulation peg—every house has its own depth of peg if you will refrain from stopping Ganymede—something to wonder at. Three fingers and a trifle over seems to be the use of the officers and seamen who are talking so quietly in the doorway One says—he has evidently finished a long story—"and so he shipped for four pound ten with a first mate's certificate and all, and that was in a German barque." Another spits with conviction and says genially, without raising his voice: "That was a hell of a ship; who knows her?" No answer from the panchayet, but a Dane or a German wants to know whether the Myra is "up" yet. A dry, red-haired man gives her exact position in the river—(How in the world can he know?)—and the probable hour of her arrival. The grave debate drifts into a discussion of a recent river accident, whereby a big steamer was damaged, and had to put back and discharge cargo. A burly gentleman who is taking a constitutional down Lal Bazar strolls up and says: "I tell you she fouled her own chain with her own forefoot. Hev you seen the plates?" "No." Then how the——can any——like you——say what it——well was?" He passes on, having delivered his highly-flavored opinion without heat or passion. No one seems to resent the expletives.

Let us get down to the river and see this stamp

of men more thoroughly. Clarke Russell has told us that their lives are hard enough in all conscience. What are their pleasures and diversions? The Port Office, where lives the gentlemen who make improvements in the Port of Calcutta, ought to supply information. It stands large and fair, and built in an orientalized manner after the Italians at the corner of Fairlie Place upon the great Strand Road, and a continual clamor of traffic by land and by sea goes up throughout the day and far into the night against its windows. This is a place to enter more reverently than the Bengal Legislative Council, for it houses the direction of the uncertain Hugli down to the Sandheads, owns enormous wealth, and spends huge sums on the frontaging of river banks, the expansion of jetties, and the manufacture of docks costing two hundred lakhs of rupees. Two million tons of sea-going shippage yearly find their way up and down the river by the guidance of the Port Office, and the men of the Port Office know more than it is good for men to hold in their heads. They can without reference to the telegraphic bulletins give the position of all the big steamers, coming up or going down, from the Hugli to the sea, day by day with their tonnage, the names of their captains and the nature of their cargo. Looking out from the veranda of their officer over a lancer-regiment of masts, they can declare truthfully the name of every ship within eye-scope, with the day and hour when she will depart.

In a room at the bottom of the building lounge big men, carefully dressed. Now there is a type of face which belongs almost exclusively to Bengal Cavalry officers—majors for choice. Everybody knows the bronzed, black-mustached, clear-speaking Native Cavalry officer. He exists unnaturally in novels, and naturally on the frontier. These men in the big room have its caste of face so strongly marked that one marvels what officers are doing by the river. "Have they come to book passengers for home?" "Those men! They're pilots. Some of them draw between two and three thousand rupees a month. They are responsible for half-a-million pounds' worth of cargo sometimes." They certainly are men, and they carry themselves as such. They confer together by twos and threes, and appeal frequently to shipping lists.

"Isn't a pilot a man who always wears a pea-jacket and shouts through a speaking-trumpet?" "Well, you can ask those gentlemen if you like. You've got your notions from home pilots. Ours aren't that kind exactly. They are a picked service, as carefully weeded as the Indian Civil. Some of 'em have brothers in it, and some belong to the old Indian army families." But they are not all equally well paid. The Calcutta papers sometimes echo the groans of the junior pilots who are not allowed the handling of ships over a certain tonnage. As it is yearly growing cheaper to build one big steamer than two little ones, these juniors are crowded out, and, while the seniors get

their thousands, some of the youngsters make at the end of one month exactly thirty rupees. This is a grievance with them; and it seems well-founded.

In the flats above the pilots' room are hushed and chapel-like offices, all sumptuously fitted, where Englishmen write and telephone and telegraph, and deft Babus forever draw maps of the shifting Hugli. Any hope of understanding the work of the Port Commissioners is thoroughly dashed by being taken through the Port maps of a quarter of a century past. Men have played with the Hugli as children play with a gutter-runnel, and, in return, the Hugli once rose and played with men and ships till the Strand Road was littered with the raffle and carcasses of big ships. There are photos on the walls of the cyclone of '64, when the Thunder came inland and sat upon an American barque, obstructing all the traffic. Very curious are these photos, and almost impossible to believe. How can a big, strong steamer have her three masts razed to deck level? How can a heavy, country boat be pitched on to the poop of a high-walled liner? and how can the side be bodily torn out of a ship? The photos say that all these things are possible, and men aver that a cyclone may come again and scatter the craft like chaff. Outside the Port Office are the export and import sheds, buildings that can hold a ship's cargo a-piece, all standing on reclaimed ground. Here be several strong smells, a mass of railway lines, and a multitude of men. "Do you see where

that trolley is standing, behind the big P. and O. berth? In that place as nearly as may be the Govindpur went down about twenty years ago, and began to shift out!" "But that is solid ground." "She sank there, and the next tide made a scour-hole on one side of her. The returning tide knocked her into it. Then the mud made up behind her. Next tide the business was repeated—always the scour-hole in the mud and the filling up behind her. So she rolled and was pushed out and out until she got in the way of the shipping right out yonder, and we had to blow her up. When a ship sinks in mud or quicksand she regularly digs her own grave and wriggles herself into it deeper and deeper till she reaches moderately solid stuff. Then she sticks." Horrible idea, is it not, to go down and down with each tide into the foul Hugli mud?

Close to the Port Offices is the Shipping Office, where the captains engage their crews. The men must produce their discharges from their last ships in the presence of the shipping master, or as they call him—"The Deputy Shipping." He passes them as correct after having satisfied himself that they are not deserters from other ships, and they then sign articles for the voyage. This is the ceremony, beginning with the "dearly beloved" of the crew-hunting captain down to the "amazement" of the identified deserter. There is a dingy building, next door to the Sailors' Home, at whose gate stand the cast-ups of all the

seas in all manner of raiment. There are Seedee boys, Bombay serangs and Madras fishermen of the salt villages, Malays who insist upon marrying native women grow jealous and run amuck: Malay-Hindus, Hindu-Malay-whites, Burmese, Burma-whites, Burma-native-whites, Italians, with gold earrings and a thirst for gambling, Yankees of all the States, with Mulattoes and pure buck-niggers, red and rough Danes, Cingalese, Cornish boys who seem fresh taken from the plow-tail "corn-stalks" from colonial ships where they got four pound ten a month as seamen, tun-bellied Germans, Cockney mates keeping a little aloof from the crowd and talking in little knots together, unmistakable "Tommies" who have tumbled into seafaring life by some mistake, cockatoo-tufted Welshmen spitting and swearing like cats, broken-down loafers, gray-headed, penniless, and pitiful, swaggering boys, and very quiet men with gashes and cuts on their faces. It is an ethnological museum where all the specimens are playing comedies and tragedies. The head of it all is the "Deputy Shipping," and he sits, supported by an English policeman whose fists are knobby, in a great Chair of State. The "Deputy Shipping" knows all the iniquity of the riverside, all the ships, all the captains, and a fair amount of the men. He is fenced off from the crowd by a strong wooden railing, behind which are gathered those who "stand and wait," the unemployed of the mercantile marine. They have had their spree—

poor devils—and now they will go to sea again on as low a wage as three pound ten a month, to fetch up at the end in some Shanghai stew or San Francisco hell. They have turned their backs on the seductions of the Howrah boarding-houses and the delights of Colootollah. If Fate will, "Nightingales" will know them no more for a season, and their successors may paint Collinga Bazar vermilion. But what captain will take some of these battered, shattered wrecks whose hands shake and whose eyes are red?

Enter suddenly a bearded captain, who has made his selection from the crowd on a previous day, and now wants to get his men passed. He is not fastidious in his choice. His eleven seem a tough lot for such a mild-eyed, civil-spoken man to manage. But the captain in the Shipping Office and the captain on the ship are two different things. He brings his crew up to the "Deputy Shipping's" bar, and hands in their greasy, tattered discharges. But the heart of the "Deputy Shipping" is hot within him, because, two days ago, a Howrah crimp stole a whole crew from a down-dropping ship, insomuch that the captain had to come back and whip up a new crew at one o'clock in the day. Evil will it be if the "Deputy Shipping" finds one of these bounty-jumpers in the chosen crew of the Blenkindoon, let us say.

The "Deputy Shipping" tells the story with heat. "I didn't know they did such things in

Calcutta," says the captain. "Do such things! They'd steal the eye-tooth out of your head there, Captain," He picks up a discharge and calls for Michael Donelly, who is a loose-knit, vicious-looking Irish-American who chews. "Stand up, man, stand up!" Michael Donelly wants to lean against the desk, and the English policeman won't have it "What was your last ship?" "Fairy Queen." "When did you leave her?" "'Bout 'leven days." "Captain's name?" "Flahy." "That'll do. Next man: Jules Anderson." Jules Anderson is a Dane. His statements tally with the discharge-certificate of the United States, as the Eagle attesteth. He is passed and falls back. Slivey, the Englishman, and David, a huge plum-colored negro who ships as cook, are also passed. Then comes Bassompra, a little Italian, who speaks English. "What's your last ship?" "Ferdinand." "No, after that?" "German barque." Bassompra does not look happy. "When did she sail?" "About three weeks ago." "What's her name?" "Haidée." "You deserted from her?" "Yes, but she's left port." The "Deputy Shipping" runs rapidly through a shipping-list, throws it down with a bang. "'Twon't do. No German barque Haidée here for three months. How do I know you don't belong to the Jackson's crew? Cap'ain, I'm afraid you'll have to ship another man. He must stand over. Take the rest away and make 'em sign."

The bead-eyed Bassompra seems to have lost

his chance of a voyage, and his case will be inquired into. The captain departs with his men and they sign articles for the voyage, while the "Deputy Shipping" tells strange tales of the sailorman's life. "They'll quit a good ship for the sake of a spree, and catch on again at three pound ten, and by Jove, they'll let their skippers pay 'em at ten rupees to the sovereign—poor beggars! As soon as the money's gone they'll ship, but not before. Every one under rank of captain engages here. The competition makes first mates ship sometimes for five pounds or as low as four ten a month." (The gentleman in the boarding-house was right, you see.) "A first mate's wages are seven ten or eight, and foreign captains ship for twelve pounds a month and bring their own small stores—everything, that is to say, except beef, peas, flour, coffee and molasses."

These things are not pleasant to listen to while the hungry-eyed men in the bad clothes lounge and scratch and loaf behind the railing. What comes to them in the end? They die, it seems, though that is not altogether strange. They die at sea in strange and horrible ways; they die, a few of them, in the Kintals, being lost and suffocated in the great sink of Calcutta; they die in strange places by the waterside, and the Hugli takes them away under the mooring chains and the buoys, and casts them up on the sands below, if the River Police have missed the capture. They sail the sea because they must live; and there is

no end to their toil. Very, very few find haven of any kind, and the earth, whose ways they do not understand, is cruel to them, when they walk upon it to drink and be merry after the manner of beasts. Jack ashore is a pretty thing when he is in a book or in the blue jacket of the Navy. Mercantile Jack is not so lovely. Later on, we will see where his "sprees" lead him.

CHAPTER V

WITH THE CALCUTTA POLICE

"The City was of Night—perchance of Death,
But certainly of Night."
——*The City of Dreadful Night.*

In the beginning, the Police were responsible. They said in a patronizing way that, merely as a matter of convenience, they would prefer to take a wanderer round the great city themselves, sooner than let him contract a broken head on his own account in the slums. They said that there were places and places where a white man, unsupported by the arm of the law, would be robbed and mobbed; and that there were other places where drunken seamen would make it very unpleasant for him. There was a night fixed for the patrol, but apologies were offered beforehand for the comparative insignificance of the tour.

"Come up to the fire lookout in the first place, and then you'll be able to see the city." This was at No. 22, Lal Bazar, which is the headquarters of the Calcutta Police, the center of the great web of telephone wires where Justice sits all day and all night looking after one million people and a floating population of one hundred thousand.

But her work shall be dealt with later on. The fire outlook is a little sentry-box on the top of the three-storied police offices. Here a native watchman waits always, ready to give warning to the brigade below if the smoke rises by day or the flames by night in any ward of the city. From this eyrie, in the warm night, one hears the heart of Calcutta beating. Northward, the city stretches away three long miles, with three more miles of suburbs beyond, to Dum-Dum and Barrackpore. The lamplit dusk on this side is full of noises and shouts and smells. Close to the Police Office, jovial mariners at the sailors' coffee-shop are roaring hymns. Southerly, the city's confused lights give place to the orderly lamp-rows of the maidan and Chouringhi, where the respectabilities live and the Police have very little to do. From the east goes up to the sky the clamor of Sealdah, the rumble of the trams, and the voices of all Bow Bazar chaffering and making merry. Westward are the business quarters, hushed now, the lamps of the shipping on the river, and the twinkling lights on the Howrah side. It is a wonderful sight—this Pisgah view of a huge city resting after the labors of the day. "Does the noise of traffic go on all through the hot weather?" "Of course. The hot months are the busiest in the year and money's tightest. You should see the brokers cutting about at that season. Calcutta can't stop, my dear sir." "What happens then?" "Nothing happens; the death-rate goes up a little.

That's all!" Even in February, the weather would, up-country, be called muggy and stifling, but Calcutta is convinced that it is her cold season. The noises of the city grow perceptibly; it is the night side of Calcutta waking up and going abroad. Jack in the sailors' coffee-shop is singing joyously: "Shall we gather at the River—the beautiful, the beautiful, the River?" What an incongruity there is about his selections. However, that it amuses before it shocks the listeners, is not to be doubted. An Englishman, far from his native land is liable to become careless, and it would be remarkable if he did otherwise in ill-smelling Calcutta. There is a clatter of hoofs in the courtyard below. Some of the Mounted Police have come in from somewhere or other out of the great darkness. A clog-dance of iron hoof follows, and an Englishman's voice is heard soothing an agitated horse who seems to be standing on his hind legs. Some of the Mounted Police are going out into the great darkness. "What's on?" "Walk round at the Government House. The Reserve men are being formed up below. They're calling the roll." The Reserve men are all English, and big English at that. They form up and tramp out of the courtyard to line Government Place, and see that Mrs. Lillipop's brougham does not get smashed up by Sirdar Chuckerbutty Bahadur's lumbering C-spring barouche with the two raw Walers. Very military men are the Calcutta European Police in their set-up, and

he who knows their composition knows some startling stories of gentlemen-rankers and the like. They are, despite the wearing climate they work in and the wearing work they do, as fine five-score of Englishmen as you shall find east of Suez.

Listen for a moment from the fire lookout to the voices of the night, and you will see why they must be so. Two thousand sailors of fifty nationalities are adrift in Calcutta every Sunday, and of these perhaps two hundred are distinctly the worse for liquor. There is a mild row going on, even now, somewhere at the back of Bow Bazar, which at nightfall fills with sailor-men who have a wonderful gift of falling foul of the native population. To keep the Queen's peace is of course only a small portion of Police duty, but it is trying. The burly president of the lock-up for European drunks—Calcutta central lock-up is worth seeing—rejoices in a sprained thumb just now, and has to do his work left-handed in consequence. But his left hand is a marvelously persuasive one, and when on duty his sleeves are turned up to the shoulder that the jovial mariner may see that there is no deception. The president's labors are handicapped in that the road of sin to the lock-up runs through a grimy little garden—the brick paths are worn deep with the tread of many drunken feet—where a man can give a great deal of trouble by sticking his toes into the ground and getting mixed up with the

shrubs. "A straight run in" would be much more convenient both for the president and the drunk. Generally speaking—and here Police experience is pretty much the same all over the civilized world—a woman drunk is a good deal worse than a man drunk. She scratches and bites like a Chinaman and swears like several fiends. Strange people may be unearthed in the lock-ups. Here is a perfectly true story, not three weeks old. A visitor, an unofficial one, wandered into the native side of the spacious accommodation provided for those who have gone or done wrong. A wild-eyed Babu rose from the fixed charpoy and said in the best of English: "Good-morning, sir." "Good-morning; who are you, and what are you in for?" Then the Babu, in one breath: "I would have you know that I do not go to prison as a criminal but as a reformer. You've read the Vicar of Wakefield?" "Ye-es." "Well, I am the Vicar of Bengal—at least that's what I call myself." The visitor collapsed. He had not nerve enough to continue the conversation. Then said the voice of the authority: "He's down in connection with a cheating case at Serampore. May be shamming. But he'll be looked to in time."

The best place to hear about the Police is the fire lookout. From that eyrie one can see how difficult must be the work of control over the great, growling beast of a city. By all means let us abuse the Police, but let us see what the poor wretches have to do with their three thousand

natives and one hundred Englishmen. From Howrah and Bally and the other suburbs at least a hundred thousand people come in to Calcutta for the day and leave at night. Also Chandernagore is handy for the fugitive law-breaker, who can enter in the evening and get away before the noon of the next day, having marked his house and broken into it.

"But how can the prevalent offense be housebreaking in a place like this?" "Easily enough. When you've seen a little of the city you'll see. Natives sleep and lie about all over the place, and whole quarters are just so many rabbit-warrens. Wait till you see the Machua Bazar. Well, besides the petty theft and burglary, we have heavy cases of forgery and fraud, that leaves us with out wits pitted against a Bengali's. When a Bengali criminal is working a fraud of the sort he loves, he is about the cleverest soul you could wish for. He gives us cases a year long to unravel. Then there are the murders in the low houses—very curious things they are. You'll see the house where Sheikh Babu was murdered presently, and you'll understand. The Burra Bazar and Jora Bagan sections are the two worst ones for heavy cases; but Colootollah is the most aggravating. There's Colootollah over yonder—that patch of darkness beyond the lights. That section is full of tuppenny-ha'penny petty cases, that keep the men up all night and make 'em swear. You'll see Colootollah, and then per-

haps you'll understand. Bamun Bustee is the quietest of all, and Lal Bazar and Bow Bazar, as you can see for yourself, are the rowdiest. You've no notion what the natives come to the thannahs for. A naukar will come in and want a summons against his master for refusing him half-an-hour's chuti. I suppose it does seem rather revolutionary to an up-country man, but they try to do it here. Now wait a minute, before we go down into the city and see the Fire Brigade turned out. Business is slack with them just now, but you time 'em and see." An order is given, and a bell strikes softly thrice. There is an orderly rush of men, the click of a bolt, a red fire-engine, spitting and swearing with the sparks flying from the furnace, is dragged out of its shelter. A huge brake, which holds supplementary horses, men, and hatchets, follows, and a hose-cart is the third on the list. The men push the heavy things about as though they were pith toys. Five horses appear. Two are shot into the fire-engine, two—monsters these—into the brake, and the fifth, a powerful beast, warranted to trot fourteen miles an hour, backs into the hose-cart shafts. The men clamber up, some one says softly, "All ready there," and with an angry whistle the fire-engine, followed by the other two, flies out into Lal Bazar, the sparks trailing behind. Time—1 min. 40 secs. "They'll find out it's a false alarm, and come back again in five minutes." "Why?" "Because there will be no constables on the road to give 'em the di-

rection of the fire, and because the driver wasn't told the ward of the outbreak when he went out!" "Do you mean to say that you can from this absurd pigeon-loft locate the wards in the nighttime?" "Of course; what would be the good of a lookout if the man couldn't tell where the fire was?" "But it's all pitchy black, and the lights are so confusing."

"Ha! Ha! You'll be more confused in ten minutes. You'll have lost your way as you never lost it before. You're going to go round Bow Bazar section."

"And the Lord have mercy on my soul!" Calcutta, the darker portion of it, does not look an inviting place to dive into at night.

CHAPTER VI

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

"And since they cannot spend or use aright
The little time here given them in trust,
But lavish it in weary undelight
Of foolish toil, and trouble, strife and lust—
They naturally claimeth to inherit
The Everlasting Future—that their merit
May have full scope. . . . As surely is most just."

——*The City of Dreadful Night.*

THE difficulty is to prevent this account from growing steadily unwholesome. But one cannot rake through a big city without encountering muck.

The Police kept their word. In five short minutes, as they had prophesied, their charge was lost as he had never been lost before. "Where are we now?" "Somewhere off the Chitpore Road, but you wouldn't understand if you were told. Follow now, and step pretty much where we step—there's a good deal of filth hereabouts."

The thick, greasy night shuts in everything. We have gone beyond the ancestral houses of the Ghoses of the Boses, beyond the lamps, the smells, and the crowd of Chitpore Road, and

have come to a great wilderness of packed houses —just such mysterious, conspiring tenements as Dickens would have loved. There is no breath of breeze here, and the air is perceptibly warmer. There is little regularity in the drift, and the utmost niggardliness in the spacing of what, for want of a better name, we must call the streets. If Calcutta keeps such luxuries as Commissioners of Sewers and Paving, they die before they reach this place. The air is heavy with a faint, sour stench—the essence of long-neglected abominations—and it cannot escape from among the tall, three-storied houses. "This, my dear sir, is a perfectly respectable quarter as quarters go. That house at the head of the alley, with the elaborate stucco-work round the top of the door, was built long ago by a celebrated midwife. Great people used to live here once. Now it's the—Aha! Look out for that carriage." A big mail-phæton crashes out of the darkness and, recklessly driven, disappears. The wonder is how it ever got into this maze of narrow streets, where nobody seems to be moving, and where the dull throbbing of the city's life only comes faintly and by snatches. "Now it's the what?" "St. John's Wood of Calcutta—for the rich Babus. That 'fitton' belonged to one of them." "Well, it's not much of a place to look at?" "Don't judge by appearances. About here live the women who have beggared kings. We aren't going to let you down into unadulterated vice all at once. You must see it

first with the gilding on—and mind that rotten board."

Stand at the bottom of a lift and look upward. Then you will get both the size and the design of the tiny courtyard round which one of these big dark houses is built. The central square may be perhaps ten feet every way, but the balconies that run inside it overhang, and seem to cut away half the available space. To reach the square a man must go round many corners, down a covered-in way, and up and down two or three baffling and confused steps. There are no lamps to guide, and the janitors of the establishment seem to be compelled to sleep in the passages. The central square, the patio or whatever it must be called, reeks with the faint, sour smell which finds its way impartially into every room. "Now you will understand," say the Police kindly, as their charge blunders, shin-first, into a well dark winding staircase, "that these are not the sort of places to visit alone." "Who wants to? Of all the disgusting, inaccessible dens—Holy Cupid, what's this?"

A glare of light on the stair-head, a clink of innumerable bangles, a rustle of much fine gauze, and the Dainty Iniquity stands revealed, blazing—literally blazing—with jewelry from head to foot. Take one of the fairest miniatures that the Delhi painters draw, and multiply it by ten; throw in one of Angelica Kaufmann's best portraits, and add anything that you can think of from

Beckford to Lalla Rookh, and you will still fall short of the merits of that perfect face. For an instant, even the grim, professional gravity of the police is relaxed in the presence of the Dainty Iniquity with the gems, who so prettily invites every one to be seated, and proffers such refreshments as she conceives the palates of the barbarians would prefer. Her Abigails are only one degree less gorgeous than she. Half a lakh, or fifty thousand pounds' worth—it is easier to credit the latter statement than the former—are disposed upon her little body. Each hand carries five jeweled rings which are connected by golden chains to a great jeweled boss of gold in the center of the back of the hand. Earrings weighted with emeralds and pearls, diamond nose-rings, and how many other hundred articles make up the list of adornments. English furniture of a gorgeous and gimcrack kind, unlimited chandeliers and a collection of atrocious Continental prints—something, but not altogether, like the glazed plaques on bon-bon boxes—are scattered about the house, and on every landing—let us trust this is a mistake—lies, squats, or loafs a Bengali who can talk English with unholy fluency. The recurrence suggests—only suggests, mind—a grim possibility of the affectation of excessive virtue by day tempered with the sort of unwholesome enjoyment after dusk—this loafing and lobbying and chattering and smoking, and unless the bottles lie, tippling among the foul-tongued

handmaidens of the Dainty Iniquity. How many men follow this double, deleterious sort of life? The Police are discreetly dumb.

"Now don't go talking about 'domiciliary visits' just because this one happens to be a pretty woman. We've got to know these creatures. They make the rich man and the poor spend their money; and when a man can't get money for 'em honestly, he comes under our notice. Now do you see? If there was any 'domiciliary' visit about it, the whole houseful would be hidden past our finding as soon as we turned up in the courtyard. We're friends—to a certain extent." And indeed, it seemed no difficult thing to be friends to any extent with the Dainty Iniquity who was so surpassingly different from all that experience taught of the beauty of the East. Here was the face from which a man could write Lalla Rookhs by the dozen, and believe every word that he wrote. Hers was the beauty that Byron sang of when he wrote—

"Remember, if you come here alone, the chances are that you'll be clubbed, or stuck, or, anyhow, mobbed. You'll understand that this part of the world is shut to Europeans—absolutely. Mind the steps, and follow on." The vision dies out in the smells and gross darkness of the night, in evil, time-rotten-brickwork, and another wilderness of shut-up houses, wherein it seems that people do continually and feebly strum stringed instruments of a plaintive and wailsome nature.

Follows, after another plunge into a passage of a courtyard, and up a staircase, the apparition of a Fat Vice, in whom is no sort of romance, nor beauty, but unlimited coarse humor. She too is studded with jewels, and her house is even finer than the house of the other, and more infested with the extraordinary men who speak such good English and are so deferential to the Police. The Fat Vice has been a great leader of fashion in her day, and stripped a zemindar Raja to his last acre—insomuch that he ended in the House of Correction for a theft committed for her sake. Native opinion has it that she is a "monstrous well preserved woman." On this point, as on some others, the races will agree to differ.

The scene changes suddenly as a slide in a magic lantern. Dainty Iniquity and Fat Vice slide away on a roll of streets and alleys, each more squalid than its predecessor. We are "somewhere at the back of the Machua Bazar," well in the heart of the city. There are no houses here—nothing but acres and acres, it seems, of foul wattle-and-dab huts, any one of which would be a disgrace to a frontier village. The whole arrangement is a neatly contrived germ and fire trap, reflecting great credit upon the Calcutta Municipality.

"What happens when these pigsties catch fire?" "They're built up again," say the Police, as though this were the natural order of things. "Land is immensely valuable here." All the more reason,

then, to turn several Hausmanns loose into the city, with instructions to make barracks for the population that cannot find room in the huts and sleeps in the open ways, cherishing dogs and worse, much worse, in its unwashed bosom. "Here is a licensed coffee-shop. This is where your naukers go for amusement and to see nautches." There is a huge chappar shed ingeniously ornamented with insecure kerosene lamps, and crammed with gharri-wans, khitmatgars, small storekeepers and the like. Never a sign of a European. Why? "Because if an Englishman messed about here, he'd get into trouble. Men don't come here unless they're drunk or have lost their way." The gharri-wans—they have the privilege of voting, have they not?—look peaceful enough as they squat on tables or crowd by the doors to watch the nautch that is going forward. Five pitiful draggle-tails are huddled together on a bench under one of the lamps, while the sixth is squirming and shrieking before the impassive crowd. She sings of love as understood by the Oriental—the love that dries the heart and consumes the liver. In this place, the words that would look so well on paper, have an evil and ghastly significance. The gharri-wans stare or sup tumblers and cups of a filthy decoction, and the kunchenee howls with renewed vigor in the presence of the Police. Where the Dainty Iniquity was hung with gold and gems, she is trapped with pewter and glass; and where there

was heavy embroidery on the Fat Vice's dress, defaced, stamped tinsel faithfully reduplicates the pattern on the tawdry robes of the kunchenee. So you see, if one cares to moralize, they are sisters of the same class.

Two or three men, blessed with uneasy consciences, have quietly slipped out of the coffee-shop into the mazes of the huts beyond. The Police laugh, and those nearest in the crowd laugh applausively, as in duty bound. Perhaps the rabbits grin uneasily when the ferret lands at the bottom of the burrow and begins to clear the warren.

"The chandoo-shops shut up at six, so you'll have to see opium-smoking before dark some day. No, you won't, though." The detective nose sniffs, and the detective body makes for a half-opened door of a hut whence floats the fragrance of the black smoke. Those of the inhabitants who are able to stand promptly clear out—they have no love for the Police—and there remain only four men lying down and one standing up. This latter has a pet mongoose coiled round his neck. He speaks English fluently. Yes, he has no fear. It was a private smoking party and—"No business to-night—show how you smoke opium." "Aha! You want to see. Very good, I show. Hiya! you"—he kicks a man on the floor—"show how opium-smoking." The kickee grunts lazily and turns on his elbow. The mongoose, always keeping to the man's neck, erects

every hair of its body like an angry cat, and chatters in its owner's ear. The lamp for the opium-pipe is the only one in the room, and lights a scene as wild as anything in the witches' revel; the mongoose acting as the familiar spirit. A voice from the ground says, in tones of infinite weariness: "You take afim, so"—a long, long pause, and another kick from the man possessed of the devil—the mongoose. "You take afim?" He takes a pellet of the black, treacly stuff on the end of a knitting-needle. "And light afim." He plunges the pellet into the night-light, where it swells and fumes greasily. "And then you put it in your pipe." The smoking pellet is jammed into the tiny bowl of the thick, bamboo-stemmed pipe, and all speech ceases, except the unearthly noise of the mongoose. The man on the ground is sucking at his pipe, and when the smoking pellet has ceased to smoke will be half way to Nibhan. "Now you go," says the man with the mongoose. "I am going smoke." The hut door closes upon a red-lit view of huddled legs and bodies, and the man with the mongoose sinking, sinking on to his knees, his head bowed forward, and the little hairy devil chattering on the nape of his neck.

After this the fetid night air seems almost cool, for the hut is as hot as a furnace. "See the pukka chandu shops in full blast to-morrow. Now for Colootollah. Come through the huts. There is no decoration about this vice."

The huts now gave place to houses very tall

and spacious and very dark. But for the narrowness of the streets we might have stumbled upon Chouringhi in the dark. An hour and a half has passed, and up to this time we have not crossed our trail once. "You might knock about the city for a night and never cross the same line. Recollect Calcutta isn't one of your poky up-country cities of a lakh and a half of people.

"How long does it take to know it then?"

"About a lifetime, and even then some of the streets puzzle you." "How much has the head of a ward to know?" "Every house in his ward if he can, who owns it, what sort of characters the inhabitants are, who are their friends, who go out and in, who loaf about the place at night, and so on and so on." "And he knows all this by night as well as by day?" "Of course. Why shouldn't he?" "No reason in the world. Only it's pitchy black just now, and I'd like to see where this alley is going to end." "Round the corner beyond that dead wall. There's a lamp there. Then you'll be able to see." A shadow flits out of a gully and disappears. "Who's that?" "Sergeant of Police just to see where we're going in case of accidents." Another shadow staggers into the darkness. "Who's that?" "Man from the fort or a sailor from the ships. I couldn't quite see." The Police open a shut door in a high wall, and stumble unceremoniously among a gang of women cooking their food. The floor is of beaten earth, the steps that lead into the upper stories

are unspeakably grimy, and the heat is the heat of April. The women rise hastily, and the light of the bull's eye—for the Police have now lighted a lantern in regular "rounds of London" fashion—shows six bleared faces—one a half native half Chinese one, and the others Bengali. "There are no men here!" they cry. "The house is empty." Then they grin and jabber and chew pan and spit, and hurry up the steps into the darkness. A range of three big rooms has been knocked into one here, and there is some sort of arrangement of mats. But an average country-bred is more sumptuously accommodated in an Englishman's stable. A home horse would snort at the accommodation.

"Nice sort of place, isn't it?" says the Police, genially. "This is where the sailors get robbed and drunk." "They must be blind drunk before they come." "Na—Na! Na sailor men ee—yah!" chorus the women, catching at the one word they understand. "Arl gone!" The Police take no notice, but tramp down the big room with the mat loose-boxes. A woman is shivering in one of these. "What's the matter?" "Fever. Seek. Vary, vary seek." She huddles herself into a heap on the charpoy and groans.

A tiny, pitch-black closet opens out of the long room, and into this the police plunge. "Hullo! What's here?" Down flashes the lantern, and a white hand with black nails comes out of the gloom. Somebody is asleep or drunk in the cot.

The ring of lantern light travels slowly up and down the body. "A sailor from the ships. He's got his dungarees on. He'll be robbed before the morning most likely." The man is sleeping like a little child, both arms thrown over his head, and he is not unhandsome. He is shoeless, and there are huge holes in his stockings. He is a pure-blooded white, and carries the flush of innocent sleep on his cheeks.

The light is turned off, and the Police depart; while the woman in the loose-box shivers, and moans that she is "seek: vary, vary seek." It is not surprising.

CHAPTER VII

DEEPER AND DEEPER STILL

I built myself a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;
I said: O Soul, make merry and carouse.
Dear Soul—for all is well."

——*The Palace of Art.*

"And where next? I don't like Colootollah." The Police and their charge are standing in the interminable waste of houses under the starlight. "To the lowest sink of all," says the Police after the manner of Virgil when he took the Italian with the indigestion to look at the frozen sinners. "And where's that?" "Somewhere about here; but you wouldn't know if you were told." They lead and they lead and they lead, and they cease not from leading till they come to the last circle of the Inferno—a long, long, winding, quiet road. "There you are; you can see for yourself."

But there is nothing to be seen. On one side are houses—gaunt and dark, naked and devoid of furniture; on the other, low, mean stalls, lighted, and with shamelessly open doors, wherein women stand and lounge, and mutter and whisper one to another. There is a hush here or at least the busy silence of an officer of counting-house in

working hours. One look down the street is sufficient. Lead on, gentlemen of the Calcutta Police. Let us escape from the lines of open doors, the flaring lamps within, the glimpses of the tawdry toilet-tables adorned with little plaster dogs, glass balls from Christmas-trees, and—for religion must not be despised though women be fallen—pictures of the saints and statuettes of the Virgin. The street is a long one, and other streets, full of the same pitiful wares, branch off from it.

"Why are they so quiet? Why don't they make a row and sing and shout, and so on?" "Why should they, poor devils?" say the Police, and fall to telling tales of horror, of women decoyed into palkis and shot into this trap. Then other tales that shatter one's belief in all things and folk of good repute. "How can you Police have faith in humanity?"

"That's because you're seeing it all in a lump for the first time, and it's not nice that way. Makes a man jump rather, doesn't it? But, recollect, you've asked for the worst places, and you can't complain." "Who's complaining? Bring on your atrocities. Isn't that a European woman at that door?" "Yes. Mrs. D——, widow of a soldier, mother of seven children." "Nine, if you please, and good-evening to you," shrills Mrs. D——, leaning against the door-post her arms folded on her bosom. She is a rather pretty, slightly-made Eurasian, and whatever shame she may have owned she has long since cast behind

her. A shapeless Burmo-native trot, with high cheek-bones and mouth like a shark, calls Mrs. D—— "Mem-Sahib." The word jars unspeakably. Her life is a matter between herself and her Maker, but in that she—the widow of a soldier of the Queen—has stooped to this common foulness in the face of the city, she has offended against the white race. The Police fail to fall in with this righteous indignation. More. They laugh at it out of the wealth of their unholy knowledge. "You're from up-country, and of course you don't understand. There are any amount of that lot in the city." Then the secret of the insolence of Calcutta is made plain. Small wonder the natives fail to respect the Sahib, seeing what they see and knowing what they know. In the good old days, the honorable the directors deported him or her who misbehaved grossly, and the white man preserved his izzat. He may have been a ruffian, but he was a ruffian on a larger scale. He did not sink in the presence of the people. The natives are quite right to take the wall of the Sahib who has been at great pains to prove that he is of the same flesh and blood.

All this time Mrs. D—— stands on the threshold of her room and looks upon the men with unabashed eyes. If the spirit of that English soldier, who married her long ago by the forms of the English Church, be now flitting bat-wise above the roofs, how singularly pleased and proud it must be! Mrs. D—— is a lady with a story.

She is not averse to telling it. "What was—ahem—the case in which you were—er—hmn—concerned, Mrs. D——?" "They said I'd poisoned my husband by putting something into his drinking water." This is interesting. How much modesty has this creature? Let us see. "And—ah—did you?" "'Twasn't proved," says Mrs. D—— with a laugh, a pleasant, lady-like laugh that does infinite credit to her education and upbringing. Worthy Mrs. D——! It would pay a novelist—a French one let us say—to pick you out of the stews and make you talk.

The Police move forward, into a region of Mrs. D——'s. This is horrible; but they are used to it, and evidently consider indignation affectation. Everywhere are the empty houses, and the babbling women in print gowns. The clocks in the city are close upon midnight, but the Police show no signs of stopping. They plunge hither and thither like wreckers into the surf; and each plunge brings up a sample of misery, filth and woe.

"Sheikh Babu was murdered just here," they say, pulling up in one of the most troublesome houses in the ward. It would never do to appear ignorant of the murder of Sheikh Babu. "I only wonder that more aren't killed." The houses with their breakneck staircases, their hundred corners, low roofs, hidden courtyards and winding passages, seem specially built for crime of every kind. A woman—Eurasian—rises to a sitting position on a board-charpoy and blinks sleepily at the Po-

lice. Then she throws herself down with a grunt. "What's the matter with you?" "I live in Markiss Lane and"—this with intense gravity—"I'm so drunk." She has a rather striking gipsy-like face, but her language might be improved.

"Come along," say the Police, "we'll head back to Bentinck Street, and put you on the road to the Great Eastern." They walk long and steadily, and the talk falls on gambling hells. "You ought to see our men rush one of 'em. They like the work—natives of course. When we've marked a hell down, we post men at the entrances and carry it. Sometimes the Chinese bite, but as a rule they fight fair. It's a pity we hadn't a hell to show you. Let's go in here—there may be something forward." "Here" appears to be in the heart of a Chinese quarter, for the pigtails—do they ever go to bed?—are scuttling about the streets. "Never go into a Chinese place alone," say the Police, and swung open a postern gate in a strong, green door. Two Chinamen appear.

"What are we going to see?" "Japanese gir—No, we aren't by Jove! Catch that Chinaman quick." The pigtail is trying to double back across a courtyard into an inner chamber; but a large hand on his shoulder spins him round and puts him in rear of the line of advancing Englishmen, who are, be it observed, making a fair amount of noise with their boots. A second door is thrown open, and the visitors advance into a large, square room blazing with gas. Here thir-

teen pigtails, deaf and blind to the outer world, are bending over a table. The captured Chinaman dodges uneasily in the rear of the procession. Five—ten—fifteen seconds pass, the Englishmen standing in the full light less than three paces from the absorbed gang who see nothing. Then burly Superintendent Lamb brings down his hand on his thigh with a crack like a pistol-shot and shouts: "How do, John!" Follows a frantic rush of scared Celestials, almost tumbling over each other in their anxiety to get clear. Gudgeon before the rush of the pike are nothing to John Chinaman detected in the act of gambling. One Pigtail scoops up a pile of copper money, another a chinaware soup-bowl and only a little mound of accusing cowries remains on the white matting that covers the table. In less than half a minute two facts are forcibly brought home to the visitor. First, that a pigtail is largely composed of silk, and rasps the palm of the hand as it slides through; and secondly, that the forearm of a Chinaman is surprisingly muscular and well-developed. "What's going to be done?" "Nothing. They're only three of us, and all the ringleaders would get away. Look at the doors. We've got 'em safe any time we want to catch 'em, if this little visit doesn't make 'em shift their quarters. Hi! John! No pidgin to-night. Show how you makee play. That fat youngster there is our informer."

Half the pigtails have fled into the darkness,

but the remainder, assured and trebly assured that the Police really mean "no pidgin," return to the table and stand round while the croupier proceeds to manipulate the cowries, the little curved slip of bamboo and the soup-bowl. They never gamble, these innocents. They only come to look on, and smoke opium in the next room. Yet as the game progresses their eyes light up, and one by one they lose in to deposit their price on odd or even—the number of the cowries that are covered and left uncovered by the little soup-bowl. Mythan is the name of the amusement, and, whatever may be its demerits, it is clean. The Police look on while their charge plays and oots a parchment-skinned horror—one of Swift's Struldburgs, strayed from Laputa—of the enormous sum of two annas. The return of this wealth, doubled, sets the loser beating his forehead against the table from sheer gratitude.

"Most immortal game this. A man might drop five whole rupees, if he began playing at sundown and kept it up all night. Don't you ever play whist occasionally?"

"Now, we didn't bring you round to make fun of this department. A man can lose as much as ever he likes and he can fight as well, and if he loses all his money he steals to get more. A Chinaman is insane about gambling, and half his crime comes from it. It must be kept down." "And the other business. Any sort of supervision there?" "No; so long as they keep outside the

penal code. Ask Dr. —— about that. It's outside our department. Here we are in Bentinck Street and you can be driven to the Great Eastern in a few minutes. Joss houses? Oh, yes. If you want more horrors, Superintendent Lamb will take you round with him to-morrow afternoon at five. Report yourself at the Bow Bazar Thanna at five minutes to. Good-night."

The Police depart, and in a few minutes the silent, well-ordered respectability of Old Council House Street, with the grim Free Kirk at the end of it, is reached. All good Calcutta has gone to bed, the last tram has passed, and the peace of the night is upon the world. Would it be wise and rational to climb the spire of that kirk, and shout after the fashion of the great Lion-slayer of Tarescon: "O true believers! Decency is a fraud and a sham. There is nothing clean or pure or wholesome under the stars, and we are all going to perdition together. Amen!" On second thought it would not; for the spire is slippery, the night is hot, and the Police have been specially careful to warn their charge that he must not be carried away by the sight of horrors that cannot be written or hinted at.

"Good-morning," says the Policeman, tramping the pavement in front of the Great Eastern, and he nods his head pleasantly to show that he is the representative of Law and Peace and that the city of Calcutta is safe from itself for the present.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING LUCIA

"Was a woman such a woman—cheeks so round and lips so red?
On the neck the small head buoyant like the bell flower in its bed."

TIME must be filled in somehow till five this afternoon, when Superintendent Lamb will reveal more horrors. Why not, the trams aiding, go to the Old Park Street Cemetery? It is presumption, of course, because none other than the great Sir W. W. Hunter once went there, and wove from his visit certain fascinating articles for the Englishman; the memory of which lingers even to this day, though they were written fully two years since.

But the Great Sir W. W. went in his Legislative Consular brougham and never in an unbridled tram-car which pulled up somewhere in the middle of Dhurrumtollah. "You want go Park Street? No trams going Park Street. You get out here." Calcutta tram conductors are not polite. Some day one of them will be hurt. The car shuffles unsympathetically down the street, and the evicted is stranded in Dhurrumtollah, which may be the Hammersmith Highway of Cal-

cutta. Providence arranged this mistake, and paved the way to a Great Discovery now published for the first time. Dhurrumtollah is full of the People of India, walking in family parties and groups and confidential couples. And the people of India are neither Hindu nor Mussulman —Jew Ethiop, Gueber nor expatriated British. They are the Eurasians, and there are hundreds and hundreds of them in Dhurrumtollah now. There is Papa with a shining black hat fit for a counsellor of the Queen, and Mama, whose silken attire is tight upon her portly figure, and The Brood made up of straw-hatted, olive-cheeked, sharp-eyed little boys, and leggy maidens wearing white, open-work stockings calculated to show dust. There are the young men who smoke bad cigars and carry themselves lordily—such as have incomes. There are also the young women with the beautiful eyes and wonderful dresses which always fit so badly across the shoulders. And they carry prayer-books or baskets, because they are either going to mass or the market. Without doubt, these are the people of India. They were born in it, bred in it, and will die in it. The Englishman only comes to the country, and the natives of course were there from the first, but these people have been made here, and no one has done anything for them except talk and write about them. Yet they belong, some of them, to old and honorable families, hold "houses, messuages, and tenements" in Sealdah, and are

rich, a few of them. They all look prosperous and contented, and they chatter eternally in that curious dialect that no one has yet reduced to print. Beyond what little they please to reveal now and again in the newspapers, we know nothing about their life which touches so intimately the white on the one hand and the black on the other. It must be interesting—more interesting than the colorless Anglo-Indian article; but who has treated of it? There was one novel once in which the second heroine was an Eurasienne. She was a strictly subordinate character, and came to a sad end. The poet of the race, Henry Derozio —he of whom Mr. Thomas Edwards wrote a history—was bitten with Keats and Scott and Shelley, and overlooked in his search for material things that lay nearest to him. All this mass of humanity in Dhurrumtollah is unexploited and almost unknown. Wanted, therefore, a writer from among the Eurasians, who shall write so that men shall be pleased to read a story of Eurasian life; then outsiders will be interested in the people of India, and will admit that the race has possibilities.

A futile attempt to get to Park Street from Dhurrumtollah ends in the market—the Hogg Market men call it. Perhaps a knight of that name built it. It is not one-half as pretty as the Crawford Market, in Bombay but . . . it appears to be the trysting-place of young Calcutta. The natural inclination of youth is to lie

abed late, and to let the senior do all the hard work. Why, therefore, should Pyramus who has to be ruling account forms at ten, and Thisbe, who cannot be interested in the price or second quality beef, wander, in studiously correct raiment, round and about the stalls before the sun is well clear of the earth? Pyramus carries a walking stick with imitation silver straps upon it, and there are cloth tops to his boots; but his collar has been two days worn. Thisbe crowns her dark head with a blue velvet Tam-o'-shanter; but one of her boots lacks a button, and there is a tear in the left hand glove. Mama, who despises gloves, is rapidly filling a shallow basket, that the coolie-boy carries, with vegetables, potatoes, purple brinjals, and—Oh, Pyramus! Do you ever kiss Thisbe when Mama is not near?—garlic—yea, lusson of the bazar. Mama is generous in her views on garlic. Pyramus comes round the corner of the stall looking for nobody in particular—not he—and is elaborately polite to Mama. Somehow, he and Thisbe drift off together, and Mama, very portly and very voluble, is left to chaffer and sort and select alone. In the name of the Sacred Unities do not, young people, retire to the meat-stalls to exchange confidences! Come up to this end, where the roses are arriving in great flat baskets, where the air is heavy with the fragrance of flowers, and the young buds and greenery are littering all the floor. They won't—they prefer talking by the

dead, unromantic muttons, where there are not so many buyers. How they babble! There must have been a quarrel to make up. Thisbe shakes the blue velvet Tam-o'-shanter and says: "O yess!" scornfully. Pyramus answers: "No-a, no-a. Do-ant say thatt." Mama's basket is full and she picks up Thisbe hastily. Pyramus departs. He never came here to do any marketing. He came to meet Thisbe, who in ten years will own a figure very much like Mama's. May their way be smooth before them, and after honest service of the Government, may Pyramus retire on Rs. 250 per mensen, into a nice little house somewhere in Monghyr or Chunar.

From love by natural sequence to death. Where is the Park Street Cemetery? A hundred gharri-wans leap from their Boxes and invade the market, and after a short struggle one of them uncarts his capture in a burial-ground—a ghastly new place, close to a tramway. This is not what is wanted. The living dead are here—the people whose names are not yet altogether perished and whose tombstones are tended. "Where are the old dead?" "Nobody goes there," says the gharri-wan. "It's up that road." He points up a long and utterly deserted thoroughfare, running between high walls. This is the place, and the entrance to it, with its mallee waiting with one brown, battered rose, its grilled door and its professional notices, bears a hideous likeness to the entrance of Simla churchyard. But, once in-

side, the sightseer stands in the heart of utter desolation—all the more forlorn for being swept up. Lower Park Street cuts a great graveyard in two. The guide-books will tell you when the place was opened and when it was closed. The eye is ready to swear that it is as old as Herculaneum and Pompeii. The tombs are small houses. It is as though we walked down the streets of a town, so tall are they and so closely do they stand—a town shriveled by fire, and scarred by frost and seige. They must have been afraid of their friends rising up before the due time that they weighted them with such cruel mounds of masonry. Strong man, weak woman, or somebody's "infant son aged fifteen months" —it is all the same. For each the squat obelisk, the defaced classic temple, the celaret of chunam, or the candlestick of brickwork—the heavy slab, the rust-eaten railings, the whopper-jawed cherubs and the apoplectic angels. Men were rich in those days and could afford to put a hundred cubic feet of masonry into the grave of even so humble a person as "Jno. Clements, Captain of the Country Service, 1820." When the "dearly beloved" had held rank answering to that of Commissioner, the efforts are still more sumptuous and the verse . . . Well, the following speaks for itself:

"Soft on thy tomb shall fond Remembrance shed
The warm yet unavailing tear,
And purple flowers that deck the honored dead
Shall strew the loved and honored bier."

Failure to comply with the contract does not, let us hope, entail to forfeiture of the earnest-money; or the honored dead might be grieved. The slab is out of his tomb, and leans foolishly against it; the railings are rotted, and there are no more lasting ornaments than blisters and stains, which are the work of the weather, and not the result of the "warm yet unavailing tear." The eyes that promised to shed them have been closed any time these seventy years.

Let us go about and moralize cheaply on the tombstones, trailing the robe of pious reflection up and down the pathways of the grave. Here is a big and stately tomb sacred to "Lucia," who died in 1776 A.D., aged 23. Here also be verses which an irreverent thumb can bring to light. Thus they wrote, when their hearts were heavy in them, one hundred and sixteen years ago:

"What needs the emblem, what the plaintive strain,
What all the arts that sculpture e'er expressed,
To tell the treasure that these walls contain?
Let those declare it most who knew her best.

The tender pity she would oft display
Shall be with interest at her shrine returned,
Connubial love, connubial tears repay,
And Lucia loved shall still be Lucia mourned.

Though closed the lips, though stopped the tuneful breath,
The silent, clay-cold monitress shall teach—
In all the alarming eloquence of death
With double pathos to the heart shall preach.

Shall teach the virtuous maid, that faithful wife,
If young and fair, that young and fair was she,
Then close the useful lesson of her life,
And tell them what she is, they soon must be."

That goes well, even after all these years, does it not? and seems to bring Lucia very near, in spite of what the later generation is pleased to call the stiltedness of the old-time verse.

Who will declare the merits of Lucia—dead in her spring before there was ever a *Hickey's Gazette* to chronicle the amusements of Calcutta, and publish, with scurrilous asterisks, the liaisons of heads of departments? What pot-bellied East Indiaman brought the "virtuous maid" up the river, and did Lucia "make her bargain," as the cant of those times went, on the first, second, or third day after her arrival? Or did she, with the others of the batch, give a spinsters' ball as a last trial—following the custom of the country? No. She was a fair Kentish maiden, sent out, at a cost of five hundred pounds, English money, under the captain's charge, to wed the man of her choice, and *he* knew Clive well, had had dealings with Omichand, and talked to men who had lived through the terrible night in the Black Hole. He was a rich man, Lucia's battered tomb proves it, and he gave Lucia all that her heart could wish. A green-painted boat to take the air in on the river of evenings. Coffree slave-boys who could play on the French horn, and even a very elegant, neat coach with a genteel rutlan roof ornamented

with flowers very highly finished, ten best polished plate glasses, ornamented with a few elegant medallions enriched with mother-o'-pearl, that she might take her drive on the course as befitted a factor's wife. All these things he gave her. And when the convoys came up the river, and the guns thundered, and the servants of the Honorable East India Company drank to the king's health, be sure that Lucia before all the other ladies in the fort had her choice of the new stuffs from England and was cordially hated in consequence. Tilly Kettle painted her picture a little before she died, and the hot-blooded young writers did duel with small swords in the fort ditch for the honor of piloting her through a minuet at the Calcutta theater or the Punch House. But Warren Hastings danced with her instead, and the writers were confounded—every man of them. She was a toast far up the river. And she walked in the evening on the bastions of Fort-William, and said "La! I protest!" It was there that she exchanged congratulations with all her friends on the 20th of October, when those who were alive gathered together to felicitate themselves on having come through another hot season; and the men —even the sober factor saw no wrong here—got most royally and Britishly drunk on Madeira that had twice rounded the Cape. But Lucia fell sick, and the doctor—he who went home after seven years with five lakhs and a half, and a corner of this vast graveyard to his account—said that it

was a pukka or putrid fever, and the system required strengthening. So they fed Lucia on hot curries, and mulled wine worked up with spirits and fortified with spices, for nearly a week; at the end of which time she closed her eyes on the weary, weary river and the fort forever, and a gallant, with a turn for *belles lettres,* wept openly as men did then and had no shame of it, and composed the verses above set, and thought himself a neat hand at the pen—stap his vitals! But the factor was so grieved that he could write nothing at all—could only spend his money—and he counted his wealth by lakhs—on a sumptuous grave. A little later on he took comfort, and when the next batch came out—

But this has nothing whatever to do with the story of Lucia, the virtuous maid, the faithful wife. Her ghost went to Mrs. Westland's powder ball, and looked very beautiful.

THE END